then we can see the possibilities inherent in each new day. With *betahon* we see every glass as half full rather than half empty.

- *Menuhat nefesh*—calmness. When faced with a setback that you have no control over, do not make things worse by useless worrying. Instead, focus on the present moment, whether it is joyous or difficult, rather than become lost in the stories spun by our insecure selves.

KAVANAH

Safe and sound, I lie down and sleep, for You alone, O Lord, keep me secure (Psalm 4:9).

Or:

I place my spirit in Your care, when I wake as when I sleep, God is with me; I shall not fear, body and spirit in Your keep (last lines of *Adon Olam* prayer).

SHABBAT: A DAY FOR WALKING SOFTLY THROUGH THE WORLD

Shabbat is the central ritual of Jewish life. Its centrality lies in its origin as an intrinsic part of creation. While the festivals mark moments in Jewish history or moments in the relationship of God to the Jewish people, Shabbat exists in the very weave of the universe. According to the Torah, God created the world in six days and then rested on the seventh, not out of Divine weariness, but as a model for us to imitate. Created in God's image, we are called upon to create the world for six days of the week and to rest on the seventh. This establishes the deep rhythm of our world; the rhythm of a week. We are meant to endlessly repeat that week, attempting to finish the work of creation. Yet we come full stop at the seventh day, known as Shabbat, which literally means "to cease," "to rest."

Shabbat enables us to gain perspective, to reflect on what we have done, and to notice what still needs to be done. For Shabbat is first of all a haven from the week. Especially in our modern world, it reminds us to stop worrying about our accomplishments, about "getting somewhere" or about "being someone." Shabbat shows that meaning in our lives lies not in what we have accomplished but in being part of the universe. It provides both time and opportunity to rediscover ourselves.

Shabbat is also a reflection of the way the world should be, a pointing in the direction of all that still needs to be created. Shabbat is, in the rabbis' words, *me'ain olam haba,* "a taste of the world to come," a sketch of a world of messianic peace. In this way, Shabbat reminds us of why we are here: to be partners with God in the creation of the world.

Shabbat's rest is physical, restoring the body as does a night's sleep. It is spiritual in that it gives us time to reconnect with the spirit found in friends, community, nature, and the Holy One. By giving us a chance to look at ourselves and our lives, Shabbat encourages us to find our true direction. Looking at the world through messianic glasses allows us to see a vision of the world as it should be and thus calls us to renew our efforts to make the weekdays and Shabbat become more and more alike.

A Day for Recycling the Soul

Every religion faces the challenge of how to relate to the mundane world, the world filled with the trivial and the tempting. In the mundane world, the ego cries at its loudest, Feed me—with power, with food, with money and possessions, with all the desires and lusts that make the everyday a place of beauty and ugliness. In the hurly-burly *tohu u-vohu,* "chaos of the world," the spiritual often can't be heard over the din. Some religions urge people to withdraw from the world, others urge an ascetic approach, while still others create a religious elite to serve as models for the rest of us. Faced with the challenges of the mundane and the corruption of *hol,* the "everyday," Judaism challenges us to remain in the world, grappling with life and its complexities. But it balances that immersion in the workday world with a retreat from that world every seventh day. One-seventh of our lives, we are called to the practice of Shabbat, a key aspect of the spiritual discipline of Jewish life.

Shabbat is to be unlike the other days of the week. Not because *hol,* the "ordinary," is evil, but because we are normally caught up in the demands of those days to work, to earn a living, to succeed, to participate in the act of creation. If we lived our lives only in that way, particularly in the work ethic of our times, we would too easily lose our way in the ever-faster pace of the superhighways of modernity.

In that first week of creation, after each day except the second, God said, "and behold it was good." The midrash asks: Why does it not say at the end of the second day, "and behold it was good," as it does with all the other days of creation? Rabbi Hanina answers: "Because on that

day division was created" (see *Genesis Rabbah* 4:6). To make heaven and earth, the separation of the waters was necessary, but that brought divisiveness into the world. According to another midrash, the story of Adam and Eve took place on the afternoon of the sixth day. The week of creation thus ended with disappointment, conflict, and expulsion. God needed Shabbat to rest and reflect on all that had been created before the second week would begin. Divisiveness and disappointment are conditions of the days of *hol.*

Amid the worldliness of Judaism, Shabbat is *me-ein olam haba,* "a taste of otherworldliness." It takes us back to the first few hours of human existence when humans and nature coexisted in harmony in the Garden of Eden. On Shabbat, we do not struggle to overcome the curse "By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat" (Gen. 3:19). Our food, as in the garden, is prepared for us in advance. We do not work on Shabbat—we are back in the garden, where work and earning a living was not necessary. Renouncing our mastery of the world, we live again as partners with all creatures.

Shabbat gives us back the world's most precious commodity: time. We have nowhere to go and nothing to do. We can just be. We can think. Reflect. Search our innermost selves to remember the essentials of life. Time to be with others and in community. Time to be with the Holy One. Time to be with one's self, to remember who you are and whom you want to be.

The harmony of Shabbat points not just to the past of the Garden of Eden, but to the messianic future when the world will be one, a world where it is always Shabbat. Recycling our souls, we also allow the world to recycle and heal itself from the wounds we inflict upon it during the weekdays of creating. Both by resting on Shabbat and by refraining from work, we create the one thing allowed to be fashioned this day—Shabbat. Though the story of Genesis tells us that Shabbat is in the weave of the universe, we need to actualize it in our lives if it is to be real for us. This we do by sanctifying the day. It is a paradox in the Jewish tradition. Shabbat is Shabbat even without the Jewish people. It certainly existed long before Abraham. It is unlike the Jewish holidays in that way. If no Jew anywhere observed Passover, then Passover would not exist. Passover needs Jews to sanctify it and thereby give it

reality. Shabbat exists even if no Jew observes it, and yet, paradoxically, we are called upon to sanctify it every week. Without us, Shabbat is lacking its partner. Without us, Shabbat is lacking those who could make the healing of the world happen. Without us, Shabbat is lacking those who could work toward fulfilling the messianic vision inherent in the day.

What Is Work?

It is often noted that Shabbat is the only "ritual" in the Ten Commandments. The rest of the commandments speak either of our relationship to God or of ethical and moral principles. Yet, as the time to reexamine our relationship to the universe, Shabbat is ritual on its most mythic level—the level where we find meaning for our lives.

The Torah tells us to rest on Shabbat. But to define rest, we must first define work. The rabbis defined work as *melakhah mahshevet,* "creative enterprise."

> The *melakhah* which is forbidden on the Sabbath is conceived as the execution of an intelligent purpose by the practical skill of man. Or, more generally, production, creation, transforming an object for human purposes; but *not* physical exertion. Even if you tired yourself out the whole day, as long as you have *produced* nothing within the meaning of melakhah; as long as your activity has not been a constructive exercise of your intelligence, you have performed no melakhah. On the other hand, if you have engendered, without the slightest exertion, even the smallest change in an object for human purposes, then you have profaned the Sabbath, flouted God, and undermined your calling as a Jew. Your physical power belongs to your animal nature; it is with your technical skill which serves your spirit that you master the world—and it is with this that, as a human being, you should subject yourself to God on the Sabbath. [R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb*]

It is not physical exertion but rather the engagement in creative processes linked with physical efforts that defines work. The work of

creation is the human task, but on Shabbat we must cease from that goal and rest and reflect.

The rabbis developed very specific details of the law in order to flesh out the general principles of the Torah. For Shabbat, they used as the model for a creative enterprise the building of the *mishkan,* the sanctuary in the desert. God said to Moses, "Let them make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst" (Exod. 25:8). No act could be holier, and therefore more creative, than constructing a dwelling place here on earth for God's Presence. Having found the *model* creative act, the rabbis then made a list of activities involved in making the *mishkan* and used these as the basic categories to define *melakhah,* "work."

In the rabbinic development of Shabbat, there were always two elements, reflected in the differing versions of the Ten Commandments. In Exod. 20:8 it says, *Zakhor,* "Remember," the Sabbath day. In Deut. 5:12 it says, *Shamor,* "Observe," the Sabbath day. If *Shamor* (observe) focuses on the negative, that is, ceasing from work, *Zakhor* (remember) focuses on the positive—sanctifying the Sabbath day. For the rabbis, Shabbat was a time to be sanctified through *oneg,* "pleasurable things." People were to engage in physical pleasures such as good food, wine, and sex; and spiritual pleasures such as praying, studying, and singing. This was especially true in the past, when work was only a matter of making a living, a job rather than a career, something done for food rather than fulfillment. Shabbat became a time to spend on the finer things of life. Even today, when many of us find satisfaction in our work or our careers, Shabbat frees us from the everyday responsibilities and routines and allows us to focus on the pleasures of life and on its spiritual dimension. Deadlines become irrelevant, the ticking of clocks fades away—no meetings and no list of "to do's." What remains is a sense of the eternity of the world and its Creator, and of our place in that scheme as both creature and creator of the world.

Traditions: Preparing for Shabbat

Shabbat's status as the completion of the week is reflected in the way Jews refer to the days of the week. Rather than by a name, each day is known by a number, beginning with Sunday as "the first day." The

week leads up to the seventh day, which has a name—Shabbat. Traditionally, the best of everything was set aside for Shabbat. The best food was kept until then, the best tablecloth, the best serving utensils, etc. This was both to honor Shabbat and to make it a truly pleasurable and "rich" day.

The whole week moves toward a climax on Shabbat. Even as we save the best food for Shabbat, we can try to put aside some spiritual dainties to taste on Shabbat: a book to read, a conversation with a good friend or lover, a text to study, a physical pleasure to linger over, an aspect of nature to be appreciated.

Beginning on Saturday afternoon of the week before, and continuing on Monday and Thursday mornings, we begin to read the Torah portion that is fully read on Shabbat. We read the first *aliyah* (section of the Torah portion) on each of those days. The week itself is referred to by the name of the coming Shabbat's Torah portion. In this way, the Torah portion becomes part of the cycle of Shabbat and the week. Traditionally, Jews were supposed to review the Torah portion twice in the original Hebrew and once in translation each week. Others would study a seventh of the portion each day, completing the whole portion on Shabbat. You may find it helpful to make the Torah portion part of your week. Read at least one verse of the next week's Torah portion each day.

Each day at the end of morning services we recite a psalm for the day. On Wednesdays, we begin to anticipate the coming Shabbat in the liturgy. We add to the end of Psalm 94, the first two verses of Psalm 95. These verses, which begin with the words *lekhu neranenah,* are the first lines of the Friday night service, the Kabbalat Shabbat. In the midst of the week, when we stand furthest both from Shabbat past and Shabbat future, we look forward with eager anticipation to the coming Shabbat when we will be reciting these lines.

Erev Shabbat

Preparations intensify on Friday as we engage in shopping, cooking, and cleaning to make everything ready for Shabbat. Many people buy flowers to grace the Shabbat table. Friday is referred to as *erev Shabbat,* the "eve of Shabbat."

Kavanah: ***double manna*** The first observance of Shabbat by the Jewish people occurred even before Israel heard the sixth commandment at Mount Sinai. When the Israelites were wandering in the desert, they were fed by manna that miraculously fell from heaven every morning. On Fridays a double portion of manna fell and the Israelites were instructed to save some manna for Shabbat. They were also told that no manna would fall on Shabbat so no one should bother to go out to collect it. (Of course, there were some people who went that first Shabbat to check out if manna had fallen.) This double portion of manna has been given as the symbolic reason that today we have two *hallot* on our Shabbat table (see below).

The double portion of manna can also be seen as the *kavanah* approach to Fridays as *erev Shabbat.* Just as the manna collected on Friday served as the food for Shabbat, so should our preparations be a gathering of what we need for our Shabbat celebration. Try to do some aspect of the preparation for Shabbat on Friday even if it is only shopping for the *hallot* or setting the Shabbat table. The physical preparation should not be delegated. Spiritual preparation does not mean being devoid of the physical. As busy as a Friday can be, strive for a feeling of anticipation or at least relief at the end of a workweek.

Like the doubling of the manna, we also should double whatever our preparations have been for Shabbat. For example, if we have been reading one verse from the week's Torah portion we should now read two. If we give to beggars on the street, then give double on Fridays (or if we have not given during the week, then specifically give on Fridays).

The transition How do we shift from one mode of experience—the workweek of creation—to the holiness of Shabbat? The rituals of Friday night itself are meant to aid us in that transition. Even the moments before Shabbat are part of that transition. As Shabbat approaches, we try to create a ritual of transition. In a traditional home that might involve turning on the oven or the electric lights to be left on for Shabbat.

This is also accomplished by setting the table or preparing the Shabbat candlesticks by removing old wax and putting in new candles. Traditionally, you empty your pockets because you don't carry things outside on Shabbat. It can also be a way to mark the change from the week, just as putting aside your briefcase or daily planner shows that Shabbat is not part of the world of work. A wallet, office keys, coins, a pen put away in a drawer are ways to leave the week behind as we make the transition to Shabbat.

Taking the loose change and giving it to *tzedakah* by depositing it in a *pushka,* "a collection container," before Shabbat became a tradition because money is not used or even touched on Shabbat. It is also an ironic acknowledgment that our Shabbat is only partly real; the rest is a dream. For despite our resting on Shabbat, the world does not get to rest. Despite our enjoyment of good food, there are those in the world who have no food. In the Garden of Eden, our food was just there waiting to be plucked. We try to reenter the garden on Shabbat, but it is only a partial return. We may not prepare our food on Shabbat, but then we do have to prepare it before Shabbat. Manna no longer falls from heaven. We need to work at it. We can only make Shabbat as gardenlike as possible in an imperfect world. Similarly, before we begin Shabbat, we acknowledge the imperfection of the world—a world of poverty and oppression—by giving to *tzedakah*. Finally, by giving *tzedakah,* we are opening our hearts to others, which in turn readies our hearts to be open to the spirit of Shabbat.

Finally, while preparing our homes and surroundings, we prepare ourselves. This internal process also has an external dimension. We shower before Shabbat. In this way we not only wash away the "sweat of our brow" of the workweek, we also freshen and renew our bodies for Shabbat. There is a tradition among Jewish mystics to immerse in the *mikvah,* the "ritual bath," each week before Shabbat. Take a moment in the shower to experience the warmth and the sensuous feel of the water as it washes over your body. Remind yourself that this shower has an additional purpose beyond the other showers of the week. With it, we move from the ordinary week to the spirit of Shabbat, a time when the body is not to be left behind. The time in the shower can also be used to prepare our spirit for Shabbat. Try to

"wash away" anything from the week that you don't want to take into Shabbat—anger, despair, or stress. Feel those emotions wash away as you leave them aside for Shabbat. Now we clothe our bodies for Shabbat. Traditionally, our best clothes were worn on Shabbat, so there was a marked difference between dress for Shabbat and for weekday. Nowadays, since many people wear their "dress-up" clothes all week, in some communities it has become the custom to dress informally for Shabbat. A few people have a special garment reserved for Shabbat even if it is only a special *kippah,* "skullcap."

Friday Night

The central motif of Friday night, expressed through its rituals, is the welcoming of Shabbat. We sanctify the day as we gather with friends or family to eat a meal. Often in our busy world this is the only time all week that a family sits down and eats a meal together.

Shabbat begins at sundown on Friday nights. Since the rabbis wanted to make sure no one accidentally continued working past the sundown deadline, they created a margin for error by setting Shabbat's initiating ritual eighteen minutes *before* sundown. This was also done because of the rabbis' desire to expand the precious day as much as possible by adding to both its beginning and, as we shall see, to its ending.

Hadlakat ha-neirot, ***lighting the candles*** Candle lighting marks the beginning of Shabbat. Since lighting fire on Shabbat was prohibited, a candle or lamp was lit before Shabbat began so that its light would last as long as possible on Friday nights. The Shabbat candles, however, have more than a practical purpose. Their fire symbolizes the warmth and joy Shabbat can bring to those who welcome her, and their light symbolizes the enlightenment that can come to those who stop for a day of rest. This is one of the few *mitzvot* traditionally performed by women, who were seen as the upholders of the home and family. Women would use the moment of candle lighting to pray for good health and fortune for their family. Here is a traditional women's prayer at candle lighting:

O God of Your people Israel: You are holy and You made the Sabbath and the people of Israel holy. You have called upon us to honor the Sabbath with light, with joy, and with peace. As a king and queen give love to one another—as a bride and her bridegroom—so have we kindled these two lights for love of your daughter, the Sabbath day. Almighty God, grant me and all my loved ones a chance to truly rest on this Sabbath day. May the light of the candles drive out from among us the spirit of anger, the spirit of harm. Send Your blessings to my children that they may walk in the ways of Your Torah Your light. May You ever be their God and mine, O Lord, my Creator and my Redeemer. Amen. [Translated from the Yiddish by Arthur Green, in *The First Jewish Catalog*]

It is customary to light two candles, perhaps symbolic of the two versions of the Shabbat commandment in the Ten Commandments (one found in Exodus and the other in Deuteronomy). The candles are also said to symbolize the different parts of ourselves—the disunity and disharmony that exist in the everyday world, which now are being drawn together by the lighting of the two candles. Some people light one additional candle for each member of the household above the number two (e.g., three candles for one parent with two children).

Many people have the custom of holding out their hands and then drawing them in to cover their eyes. Some repeat this gesture of "drawing in" a number of times. Shabbat begins in darkness—a world without light, but then we open our eyes to its light. Anytime we make a rapid transition from darkness to light our eyes are first dazzled by the light. We symbolically create Shabbat's brilliant radiance by moving from darkness to light. We follow this with an open-armed gesture of welcome as we draw into ourselves the light and warmth of Shabbat.

The origin of this custom may be related to a halakhic concern. In general, we say a blessing for a *mitzvah* before we actually do the *mitzvah*. In this case there was concern that if the blessing were said it would initiate the beginning of Shabbat, and thereby prohibit the lighting of the candles (since it is forbidden to start a fire on Shabbat). Therefore, we first light the candles and then we cover our eyes. After we recite the blessing, the light of the candles is "revealed" to us.

Saying the blessing *Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kidshanu be-mitzvotav ve-tzivanu le-hadlik ner shel Shabbat.* "Praised are You, Eternal One, our God, source of the universe, who has made us holy through the *mitzvot* and commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights."

While their eyes are still covered, some meditate or add their own prayer. It is customary to wish anyone present a *"Shabbat shalom"* after the candle lighting (see "Shabbat Salutations" below).

Once the candles are lit, Shabbat has begun and its splendor and peace descend on the household. In some synagogues candle lighting precedes the Friday night services. Similarly, some people light candles immediately before their Friday night meal whether or not this is the traditional time for candle lighting. In this view, Shabbat "officially" begins for them when the ritual candle lighting is performed.

Kabbalat Shabbat

The Friday night service is different from the evening weekday service and has its own name, Kabbalat Shabbat, "the welcoming of the Shabbat." The service begins with six psalms, representing the six days of the week, followed by the hymn "Lekha Dodi," "Come My Beloved." This hymn, usually sung, calls upon us to rise and greet the Sabbath Queen. Kabbalat Shabbat helps us make the transformation from weekday to Shabbat. This service is a relatively recent addition to Jewish liturgy, composed by the mystics of Safed in Israel in the sixteenth century. This part of the service is followed by *ma'ariv,* the evening service. In the *amidah,* the "standing prayer," the central blessing takes for its theme creation and Shabbat.

The* kavanah *and imagery of Kabbalat Shabbat The mystics saw our task in the world as bringing together the scattered divine sparks (see "After the Words: God," pp. 490–91). One image they used was the uniting of the masculine and feminine aspects of the Godhead. Shabbat was described as feminine, as the bride whose arrival is to be greeted with affection and enthusiasm. For the mystics, Kabbalat Shab-

bat was the way to welcome the Shabbat bride into the world. Their Shabbat-welcoming custom was to go out into the fields around Safed to show their eagerness to greet her. As a remnant of that custom, we still turn toward the door for the last stanza of "Lekha Dodi" and bow twice in a sign of welcome to the arriving Shabbat. All of our preparation leads up to this moment when Shabbat is welcomed into our lives. We stand cleansed and wearing fresh clothes, our hearts opened by the act of giving to *tzedakah,* our bodies having basked in the light of the Shabbat candles, eagerly taking Shabbat into our souls. It is through this act of welcoming that we can really enter into the unique quality of the world of Shabbat.

The image of the mystics' journey to greet Shabbat can also be a model to us to go out into the world on Shabbat. This going-out would mean to really *see* the world on Shabbat rather than view it as we often do during the week, as if from a window of a passing train.

Shabbat salutations It is customary to greet people on Shabbat by saying (Yiddish) *Gut Shabbos!,* "a good Shabbos!" or (Hebrew) *Shabbat shalom,* "a peaceful Shabbat!"

The Friday Evening Meal

"Shalom Aleichem," "Peace Be unto You," is the traditional hymn sung at the Friday night table. We welcome the Sabbath by greeting the angels who accompany the Sabbath. It is also a call for *shalom,* "peace," to come into our homes.

Blessing the children It is customary for parents to bless their children on Friday night. A number of customs are observed as to when this is done—at candle lighting, upon returning from the synagogue, or before reciting *kiddush*. The traditional blessing is:

For a girl: *Yesimekh elohim kesarah rivkah rahel ve-le'ah.* "May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah."

For a boy: *Yesimekha elohim ke'efrayim ve-khimnasheh.* "May God make you like Ephraim and Menasheh."

Some parents place their hands on the child's head and recite the priestly blessing or their own prayers for their children.

The Priestly Blessing:

Yeverekha Adonai veyishmerekha. Ya'er Adonai panav elekha vihuneka. Yisa Adonai panav elekha veyasem lekha shalom. "May God bless you and keep you. May God's Presence shine on you and be gracious to you. May God's Presence rise toward you and give you peace."

Some families have expanded on this custom by having the children bless their parents and siblings.

Traditionally, at this moment, men sang or recited "Eshet Chayil," "A Woman of Valor," to their wives. These verses from Prov. 31:10–31 praise a woman's many virtues. Actually, this custom originated with the mystics who regarded these verses as a reference to the *Shekhinah,* the feminine aspect of God. Many people nowadays no longer recite "Eshet Chayil" since its recitation reinforces stereotypical roles for women. A closer reading of the text of Proverbs, however, actually portrays an image of a woman accomplished at many things. For some this too is problematic for its presentation of a "superwoman" stereotype. Some have attempted to remove the one-sidedness of the custom, which is its inherent problem, by including an equivalent paragraph recited by the wife in honor of her husband. There is no standard text for this but some use Psalm 112.

Blessing significant others Shabbat is a time when the Divine energy flows into the world, when we can feel God's blessings and the blessings of this world, God's creation, as well. Building on the tradition of "Eshet Chayil" on Friday night, some people have begun to express words of blessing to their spouses and loved ones. To offer blessings is both an expression of appreciation for the gift of someone's presence in your life and a way of verbalizing good wishes and hopes for that person. Often we are too busy during the week to express such feelings and can too easily take for granted the significant others in our lives.

Kiddush: *sanctifying the day* *Kiddush,* from the word for "holiness," is the prayer recited over a full cup of wine or grape juice. It con-

sists of a recitation of the verses in Genesis that describe Shabbat, followed by blessings over the wine and a blessing stating that God has given us the Shabbat for us to sanctify. While on some metaphysical level Shabbat exists without us, it is up to us to celebrate and consecrate and thus make holy this day. *Kiddush* is a statement of our intent to sanctify this day. We make *kiddush* over wine because wine is a symbol of rejoicing. The roundness of the grape and the fullness of the cup symbolize the completeness that Shabbat brings and the hope that our cups are running over with the bounty of the day.

While any wineglass can be used, many people have a cup designated for *kiddush*. The most traditional medium used for making *kiddush* cups is silver, though recently ceramic *kiddush* cups have also become common.

The cup is raised during *kiddush*. Some people stand for the recital of *kiddush;* others sit. The person making *kiddush* says it on behalf of everyone present, who respond with *amen* at the end of the blessings. According to tradition, grape juice can always be substituted for wine, which is helpful for those for whom alcohol is problematic. It is customary to cover the *hallot* (plural of *hallah*) during the recital of *kiddush*.

***Washing before the* hallah** *Hallah* is a special braided loaf associated with Shabbat. Before *hallah* is eaten (or, for that matter, before partaking of any bread), there is a custom of ritually washing our hands. In ancient times, the early rabbis were very strict regarding matters of purity and impurity. Most of these regulations have been suspended since the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. However, it is still traditional to wash before eating bread as a symbolic purification. In this manner our table and eating are a symbolic reflection of the sacred quality of the priests and the altar in the Temple. While this washing is still observed by traditional Jews whenever bread is eaten, others wash ritually only on Shabbat and other special occasions.

Ritual washing begins with the filling of a pitcher or glass with water. Take the pitcher in one hand and pour water over the fingers of the other hand. Then reverse hands and pour the water over the unwashed hand. Some people do this up to three times over each hand. After the washing, recite the blessing:

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kidshanu be-mitzvotav ve-tzivanu al netilat yadayim. "Praised are You, Eternal One, our God, source of the universe who has made us holy through the commandments and commanded us concerning the washing of hands."

Dry your hands with a towel. Since the washing is preparatory to eating the bread, it is customary not to talk between the washing and the *motzi*.

KAVANAH

We ritually cleanse our hands—those appendages that are so characteristically human and with which we create all during the week. Slowly dry them while reciting the blessing. Sit in silence as others wash. Meditate on the meaning of Shabbat, of our enjoyment of and gratitude for the Shabbat table filled with good food and good company. The notion that our Shabbat table is a symbolic altar encourages us to focus on eating as a sacred activity. Shabbat's pace allows us to be aware of our eating more easily than during the hectic week.

***The* motzi, *blessing the* hallah** It is customary to use two loaves of *hallah,* termed *lehem mishneh,* at Shabbat meals. The common explanation is that it is a reminder of the double portion of manna that fell on Fridays to miraculously feed the Israelites during the forty years wandering in the desert.

The *hallot* are covered, sometimes with specially decorated cloths. One explanation for covering the *hallot* relates to the order of the various Shabbat rituals. Since precedence is given to the wine and *kiddush,* we cover the *hallot* so that they won't "realize" that they are our second priority. Being sensitive to a loaf of bread implies that we should be sensitive toward the other people gathered at our table.

It can also suggest a level of sensitivity toward the inanimate aspects of our world.

Another explanation is provided in a parable:

> A mortal king . . . had two servants whom he loved with perfect love. To one he gave a measure of wheat, and to the other he gave a measure of wheat; to one a bundle of flax, and to the other a bundle of flax. What did the clever one of the two do? He took the wheat and made it into fine flour by sifting the grain and grinding it. Then he kneaded the dough and baked it, set the loaf of bread on the table, spread the napkin over the bread, and left it to await the coming of the king.
>
> But the foolish one of the two did nothing at all. After a while the king came into his house and said to the two servants: My sons, bring me what I gave you. One brought out the table with the loaf of bread baked of fine flour on it and with the napkin spread over the bread. The other brought out his wheat in a basket with a bundle of flax over the wheat grains.
>
> What a shame! What a disgrace!
>
> So, too, when the Holy One gave the Torah to Israel, God gave it as wheat to be turned into fine flour and as flax to be turned into cloth for garments. [*Tanna de-Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 2]

On Shabbat, it is the raw Torah that we are to turn into bread and cloth. Our creative challenge shifts from the natural world to the world of the spirit. We are to be creative, not in the development of the earth, but rather in the development of ourselves. Our inner world is to be created and transformed on Shabbat. The *hallah* and its cover on our Shabbat table point to all the human enterprises of the past week that have gone into the creation of this moment. At the same time, they also point beyond, to the transformative character of Shabbat.

Now that the time has come to say the blessing, we uncover the *hallah:*

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam ha-motzi lehem min ha-aretz. "Praised are You, Eternal One, our God, source of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth."

Slice the *hallah* and distribute a piece to everyone. It is customary to sprinkle a little salt on it. Salt was used in the sacrificial rites in the Temple. Since the destruction of the Temple, our tables have become "altars" and our use of salt symbolizes this transference. Some tear the *hallah* instead of slicing it because of the symbolism. Just as the altar was built without any iron tools (iron connoting war and violence), so too, at our table we do not use a knife to cut the *hallah*.

***The meal and* zemirot** A traditional Friday evening meal generally consists of chicken soup and chicken, but the menu is not fixed. The point is to save the best that we can serve for the Sabbath.

Singing at the table on Friday night after the meal is a time-honored custom. Song affords both physical and spiritual pleasure, and singing together enhances companionship. We sing praises of Shabbat as well as of God. Some have the custom of singing Israeli and Hasidic melodies, while others sing the traditional Shabbat table songs called *zemirot*. These *zemirot* can be found in almost any *Siddur* (prayer book) and also in small booklets that contain both the *zemirot* and the Grace after Meals (see below). Such booklets are called bentschers, from the Yiddish word for "bless." There are also many songbooks that contain *zemirot* and the Grace after Meals, as well as contemporary Jewish songs. These include *Book of Songs and Blessings* (National United Jewish Appeal, 1980); *B'kol Echad: In One Voice,* edited by Jeffrey Shiovitz (United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 1986); *NCSY Bencher* (National Conference of Synagogue Youth, 1993); and *Kol Haneshamah: Songs and Grace after Meals* (Reconstructionist Press, 1993).

Birkat ha-mazon It is traditional to say *birkat ha-mazon,* the Grace after Meals, upon finishing any meal in which bread is eaten. Even among those who do not practice this at every meal, many take the time to recite it after meals on Shabbat and other special occasions. There is a fairly standard melody for this prayer. There are also contemporary alternate versions of the text.

Taking the time to sing *zemirot* and say the Grace after Meals reminds us that the mood of Friday night should be contemplative and

slow. We should immerse ourselves into the relaxing atmosphere of Shabbat as we would immerse ourselves in a warm tub. Time slows down and joy seeps in.

Shabbat Morning

Shabbat morning provides us more opportunities for expanding our spiritual awareness. There isn't the usual morning rush at home to get up and out. Everything moves at a more leisurely and relaxed pace. Traditionally, nothing is eaten before morning services on Shabbat, but some people prepare a special breakfast that differs from their normal breakfast. For example, we allow our children to eat the sugared cereals that are not allowed in our house on weekdays. A friend chooses a special pastry each week for his Shabbat breakfast.

Synagogue/shul The Shabbat morning service is the highlight of the weekly liturgy. It includes both prayers and the weekly reading of the Torah portion. It is also the setting for the communal celebration of life cycle events, especially the bar/bat mitzvah. As Jews gather together each Shabbat, the communities they create form the heart and soul of the Jewish people. The morning service itself has a central theme, the revelation of Torah, which is emphasized by the *amidah* (the central or "standing" prayer), as well as by the practice of reading the weekly portion.

On the weekly Torah cycle Each week, we read from the Torah in a cycle that takes us from Genesis and creation to Deuteronomy and the death of Moses. The stories of our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, Joseph and his brothers, Moses and the Israelites, are all heard by us once each year. Similarly, the Torah's laws, from the Ten Commandments to those of leprous houses and that of not placing a stumbling block before the blind to the details of the sacrificial cult, are regularly placed before us. The building plans of the sanctuary and the warnings and promises of Deuteronomy all come before us in an unending weekly parade. The sublime and the problematic are all here in their unexpurgated version.

The Torah is read out loud in public, just as it was read to our ancestors long before there were printing presses. We read it from a scroll that is punctiliously handwritten in its original Hebrew form, without vowels or punctuation. The reader chants the words using an ancient system of cantillation. As we listen, or follow along in printed versions of the text, our awareness is heightened to the fact that our ancestors have engaged with this text, wrestled with it, and lived with it and by it for thousands of years.

By establishing the weekly cycle of reading the Torah, the rabbis wanted to ensure that Torah would remain accessible to all Jews, not just to kings or priests or rabbis. This access and interaction with Torah is a basic notion in Judaism (for more see the "Torah: Path of Study, pp. 139–75). The public reading on Shabbat, often accompanied with a *d'var torah,* a "word of Torah," a sermon or a discussion, is a prime way this engagement with Torah occurs.

Following morning services, it is customary to have a *kiddush* in shul. Making *kiddush* on Shabbat morning is only a custom and therefore lacks the sanctification *berakhah* of Friday night's *kiddush*. Since it is only a custom, we may make *kiddush* over liquor as well as wine. On Shabbat morning, the term *kiddush* has taken on an additional meaning in the context of the synagogue. It often involves providing cake or more traditionally gefilte fish, herring, and kichel to all those who attended services. Each synagogue has its own custom of what is served. Individual members or families often sponsor the *kiddush,* either by bringing the food or paying for it. This is usually done to mark an occasion: a new job, a birthday, the birth of a grandchild, and so on. In most synagogues, one person leads the *kiddush* while everyone else holds their own cup of wine, grape juice, etc. The etiquette is to wait until the *kiddush* is made communally before eating.

In many synagogues, *kiddush* over wine is immediately followed by the *motzi,* the blessing over *hallah,* which then enables everyone to enjoy the *kiddush* food. *Kiddush* encourages people to linger after services and spend social time together. It is also an opportunity for newcomers to meet synagogue members. Some synagogues are friendlier than others. Some have lots of newcomers weekly; for others a newcomer is rare. While as a stranger you want to feel welcomed, it is good

advice to make the extra effort to go up to people and introduce yourself. An easy way to start is by introducing yourself to the rabbi. Since she or he has an official position, this may feel more comfortable than approaching a random stranger. Hopefully, the rabbi responds in a friendly manner (it's part of the job!). Besides, you are already on a first-name basis, since every rabbi's first name is Rabbi!

Shabbat Lunch

Traditionally, part of the *oneg* (pleasurable aspect) of Shabbat is having three meals rather than only two meals, which were normal on weekdays in ancient times. Lunch is the second of these meals. Its ritual nature is similar in some ways to Friday night dinner. It begins with another *kiddush,* the washing of the hands, and *motzi.* The menu is not as standardized as the Friday night chicken dinner. Some people have *chulent* for lunch. *Chulent* is a stew made of meat, potatoes, and beans. (There are a number of traditions regarding its ingredients, but the preceding is the most common list.) The ingredients are put into a pot before Shabbat and are cooked either on the stove or in the oven until Shabbat lunch. This makes for an extraordinarily delicious or extraordinarily fatty and heavy dish, depending on your point of view. Some explain the origin of the Shabbat afternoon nap as merely an aftereffect of *chulent,* which makes any strenuous movement impossible. The real origins of *chulent,* of course, lie in the prohibition of cooking on Shabbat. *Chulent* is a dish that survives continuous cooking, thus creating a way to have hot food for Shabbat lunch.

Each of the three meals of Shabbat has its traditional *zemirot,* "songs," to be sung at the table, though, as on Friday night, other nontraditional songs may be sung as well. The meal concludes with *birkat ha-mazon,* the Grace after Meals.

Shabbat Afternoon

Shabbat afternoon begins as a time to relax, study, sleep, take a walk, play with your children, or chat with friends.

The day starts to draw to a close with *minhah,* the afternoon prayer

service. This is a short service distinguished by two features. First, we read the beginning of the coming week's Torah portion. This makes a statement that no sooner do we finish one part of Torah than we are eager to begin the next; it also points to the coming week and the conclusion of this week. Since a bar or bat mitzvah can be celebrated any time the Torah is read, some people have a bar or bat mitzvah at *minhah* (see pp. 345–52). The second distinguishing feature is the theme of the *amidah,* which concentrates on the unity of God and the future redemption of Israel. Thus the liturgy looks toward a future time when every day will be like Shabbat. The mood expressed in the musical *nusah,* the mode for chanting the *minhah,* is one of sadness and longing. We are sad because we know the specialness of Shabbat is departing and we long for a messianic world when it will always be Shabbat.

Seudah shelishit (shalah shoodis) The third meal of Shabbat (hence *seudah,* "meal," and *shelishit,* "third") is eaten late in the afternoon. In the synagogue it fills the time between the afternoon and evening service. It is a light meal (herring is a traditional feature). During the meal, *zemirot* are sung, usually to quieter melodies reflecting the meditative mood of this time. Between Passover and Shavuot, the custom is to study *Pirkei Avot* (translated as *Ethics of Our Ancestors*) at this time of day. This text, which contains short aphorisms or teachings by the talmudic rabbis, is found in many prayer books.

Ma'ariv *and* havdalah Just as at its beginning, the rabbis added to the ending time of Shabbat for two reasons. The first related to a question about when a day is over. Twilight is an ambiguous time. Is it part of the preceding day or the beginning of night and thus the next calendar day? To prevent any desecration of Shabbat, twilight Saturday night was treated as part of Shabbat. Secondly, this adding-on was an expression of the love of the rabbis for Shabbat and their desire to make it last as long as possible. Therefore, traditionally, Shabbat does not conclude until forty-two minutes after sunset. (This makes it exactly an hour after the candle-lighting time. There are some people who follow an extra strict tradition and wait seventy-two minutes after sunset.)

Shabbat is concluded with the recital of the prayer called *havdalah*

(which literally means "to differentiate"). As a ritual it differentiates holy from ordinary time by marking the end of Shabbat and the beginning of the new week. Besides prayers of praise, the ritúal includes blessings over wine, spices, and fire.

We use spices to compensate for our sense of loss over Shabbat's departure. According to tradition, on Shabbat we are given a *neshamah yeteirah,* "an extra soul," that leaves us at the moment of *havdalah*. We are spiritually faint as that extra soul leaves and the spices help to restore us. Others say the spices are symbolic of the fragrant aroma of the Garden of Eden and the messianic world yet to come. Shabbat is a foretaste, or more accurately a foresmell, of the world to come, and the spices help the scent of Shabbat linger into the week.

For fire, a special multiwicked candle is usually used. (It should be torchlike according to the *halakhah*). By lighting a candle, an act forbidden during Shabbat, we are demonstrating that Shabbat is over. As the blessing over the candle is recited, the custom is to raise our hands and look at the flame through our fingers or look at our fingers (some say fingertips or fingernails) by the light of the candle. The symbolism of this part of *havdalah* has a number of interpretations. The use of fire is a widespread symbol of human creativity and power (as, for example, in the myth of Prometheus). We also look at our hands during the blessing since they are the principal tools of human creation. This blessing marks the return to the regular activity and creating of the six "workdays." Others note that we begin and end Shabbat in the same way: with our hands and with light. On Friday night, we draw in the warmth of Shabbat with our hands. On Saturday night, we watch Shabbat slip away through our fingers. On Friday night, we light two Shabbat candles. On Saturday night, we light one candle made up of multiple wicks. Thus, we begin Shabbat with the dualities of this world represented by the two candles. We end Shabbat with the two candles merged into one candle representing the unity, wholeness, and peace of Shabbat that we hope to take with us into the week. This oneness exists without losing our individual diversity represented by the candle with its multiple wicks and yet single flame.

For the *havdalah* ritual, you need a cup of wine, spices (cloves are often used), and a *havdalah* candle. Some people have a *havdalah* set or

at least a spice box that they use for *havdalah*. Some people fill the wine cup to the brim, symbolizing our sense of the abundant blessing of Shabbat. If no *havdalah* candle is available, two regular candles can be used and their wicks brought together when the blessing is said. In fact, any light source, even an electric light, can be used in a pinch.

After reciting *havdalah,* we drink from the wine. Some pour some of the wine into a plate and then extinguish the candle in it. Others extinguish the candle right in the wine cup. Still others just blow the candle out. Everyone wishes one another "a good week" in Hebrew *(Shavua Tov)* or in Yiddish *(A guteh vakh)*.

A number of traditional songs are associated with *havdalah,* including "Eliyahu Ha-navi," "Shavua Ṭov," and "Ha-mavdil." The first is a song about Elijah the prophet, who, according to Jewish legend, is the herald of the messiah. Even as we end Shabbat, we long for a time filled with its messianic peace. Recently it has become popular to sing about Miriam the prophet, as well.

KAVANAH

At this moment, at *havdalah,* the order of creation is reversed. We move back from Shabbat, the seventh day, to the creation of humans on the sixth day (symbolized by the words of *havdalah*) to the fruit trees and the vines (symbolized by the wine) to the sweet-smelling grasses (symbolized by the spices). Finally, back at the beginning, we come to the light, that first point of creation.

It is to this light that we raise our hands, those appendages that separate us from animals—our hands, the signs of human creativity. With our hands, at this moment we draw the world away from *tohu u-vohu,* "primordial chaos." We do not allow a complete reversal of creation. As we look through our fingers, light and darkness are once more separated as we imitate God's first act of creation. The order of creation is not fully reversed, but rather moves forward as both the world and we start a new week of creation.

Melave Malka

There is a custom in some traditional circles to hold a *melave malka* on Saturday night. *Melave malka* means "accompanying the queen," and refers to our desire to accompany the Sabbath Queen as she leaves on Saturday night just as we welcomed her on Friday night. It reflects our reluctance to let her go. It is similar to a *seudah shelishit,* with lots of singing, some food, and maybe some teaching.

Shabbat *Halakhah:* Ceasing from Work

As mentioned, the rabbis derived the categories of work prohibited on Shabbat from the different tasks involved in making the *mishkan,* the "sanctuary" built in the desert. These thirty-nine categories, ranging from planting to writing, are called *av melachot,* "major categories of types of work." Other activities are forbidden on Shabbat if they seem similar to the *av melachot,* even if they are activities not specified in the Torah as having been employed in the building of the desert sanctuary. These analogously prohibited activities are called *toledot.* The laws related to Shabbat have been explicated and codified in great detail over the centuries. When something new is invented, the leading rabbinic scholars of the day discuss whether it is permitted or forbidden. Thus there was a discussion as to whether electricity should be forbidden on Shabbat, since electricity is similar to fire. This led to an analysis of the nature of fire and the elements that render it forbidden for use on Shabbat. Is fire combustion? Is it the giving off of heat or the giving of light? Does electricity involve combustion? And so forth. In the end the rabbinic authorities decided that despite some differences between the nature of fire and electricity, electricity is forbidden.

The details of the laws of work on Shabbat are too extensive and complex to give a full summary here. However, let me mention some of the more prevalent activities that are affected by the traditional categories. This will also explain why traditional Jews act in certain "confusing" ways on Shabbat.

Cooking and lighting Cooking is forbidden on Shabbat. Therefore, all food to be eaten on Shabbat needs to be cooked beforehand. However, it is permissible to warm food that has already been cooked. This leads to the following complications: Since lighting a fire is also forbidden on Shabbat, you cannot turn on your stove or oven on Shabbat. Therefore it needs to be turned on before Shabbat begins and left on for the duration of Shabbat. It is not a simple accomplishment to warm food over a period of time without burning it. This has led to the *blekh* and *chulent.* A *blekh* is a piece of tin laid over the top of the stove, that allows you to leave only one burner on and yet have a warming surface for a number of pots. Best of all, a *blekh* makes the heat indirect, lessening the chance of burning the food. *Chulent* is the stew composed of meat, potatoes, and beans that cooks either in the oven or on top beginning before Shabbat and continuing until lunchtime (see above).

Particular care needs to be taken with liquids, since even if previously cooked they can boil again, and some authorities would regard this as cooking rather than warming and, thus, forbidden. This is particularly true if soup is removed from heat, becomes cold, and then is placed again on the heat. Boiling water for tea or coffee is considered cooking and thus forbidden unless a kettle is left on the flame/*blekh* for the whole Shabbat period.

Since lighting a fire is forbidden, turning on and off lights, ovens, and cars are also forbidden. Some people will put some of their lights on an electric timer to turn them on and off at designated times.

Carrying Carrying in the public domain (most simply defined as outside of a building) is forbidden, whether it is carrying a suitcase or a set of keys. Since an enclosed area is treated as a private domain, some communities have strung wires around the whole town, creating an *eruv,* the Jewish legal concept that a separate area, no matter how large, even a city, can be made into a "private" area. Within the *eruv,* Jews are permitted to carry items such as prayer books, prayer shawls, infants, and so on.

Writing and the spirit of Shabbat Another common activity prohibited on Shabbat is writing.

Needless to say, spending the day at your workplace, even if it does not involve a specific violation of Shabbat laws, is forbidden. However, there are lots of other things you could do on Shabbat that would not be forbidden under any of the thirty-nine categories. For example, while it is forbidden to carry a handkerchief in the public domain, you could move all the books in your library up two flights of stairs in your house. The rabbis believed it was important to define as clearly as possible what is forbidden, because they wanted to keep people from accidentally violating Shabbat. Yet they knew that there was no way to establish principles without loopholes. They therefore created two other kinds of forbidden activities, *shvut* and *muktzah*. *Shvut* (from the same root as the word *Shabbat*) can be most easily defined by a Yiddish word, *Shabbosdik*, that is, things that are not in the spirit of Shabbat, even if technically they might be permissible. Thus lugging three dozen boxes of books upstairs, while technically permissible, is not in the spirit of Shabbat. *Muktzah*, includes those objects which you should not handle or move on Shabbat. You should not move them because they might lead you to do something forbidden. For example, you pick up a pen (which is not a technical violation) and, forgetting it's Shabbat, you write a letter, which is prohibited. Better give up the pen altogether, the rabbis reasoned. Another category of *muktzah* includes objects that have no use on Shabbat. For example, since you cannot buy or sell on Shabbat, money has no value and therefore is *muktzah*. Both of these principles serve to prevent you from violating the spirit of Shabbat by "building a fence" around the actual laws of Shabbat.

The above is a brief and simplified conceptual framework of the Shabbat laws. Each item discussed is much more complex than we have presented here. For a number of other contemporary ways to approach these laws, see below.

Where to Begin?

Shabbat is both a central ritual in Judaism and also among the most demanding of traditional practices. After all, it asks you to change your life every seven days. For those just beginning a Shabbat observance, here are two suggestions that you may find helpful. First, take on or try

out pieces of Shabbat observance. Go one step at a time. Give yourself and the ritual a chance. You will need to try each new part of the ritual for a while before you stop feeling self-conscious. Second, begin defining *your* notion of Shabbat. Your definition might include (a) a day of rest from your job without a commitment to refrain from the halakhic definition of work; (b) a commitment not only to stay home from your job, but also not to do any errands or chores; (c) a day of relaxation involving no jobs or errands, which might include going to the movies, a drive in the country, or devoting time to your hobby of painting (even though these leisure activities might involve "violations" of traditional Shabbat laws); or (d) a day with no work but which allows for errands as long as they are done as a family. For contemporary families, Shabbat may be the only set time to be together all week. One family I know has a rule that anything done on Friday nights is okay—even homework or job-related work—as long as it is done at home. All of the above, and lots of other variations, are practiced by Jews today.

Another factor you need to determine is how much of the Shabbat period should be observed. Some Jews observe Shabbat only on Friday nights, leaving Saturday indistinguishable from Sunday. Others will go to synagogue Shabbat morning, but go shopping in the afternoon. While some will observe Shabbat until its official ending time, others will end the day when they feel it should be over.

If you are a Shabbat "beginner," it is a good idea to try to get an invitation to the home of a "veteran" for a Friday night dinner. Alternatively, your local synagogue may have a communal Friday night dinner. Shabbat can be a difficult ritual to celebrate alone. Find friends to celebrate it with even if they are also novices.

Each of the denominations upholds the primacy of Shabbat, though they have different approaches to Shabbat observance. The Orthodox movement upholds the traditional laws. The Conservative movement decided to allow people to drive to synagogue on Shabbat, arguing that it is better for people to drive and attend services then not drive and stay home. They have also allowed the use of electricity on Shabbat to the extent of turning lights on and off. In every other way, they encourage the observance of the traditions of Shabbat. The Reform movement leaves decisions about Shabbat practice to the individual. At the same

time, it encourages the observance of Shabbat rituals and the making of Shabbat into a special day (see *Gates of Shabbat: A Guide for Observing Shabbat,* by Mark Shapiro [Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1991], for three models of Reform observance). Reconstructionism, in keeping with its focus on community, often develops congregational norms for Shabbat observance, emphasizing the spirit of Shabbat rather than the specific prohibitions.

Some useful books for learning how to do Shabbat home rituals (with accompanying tapes) are *Gates of Shabbat,* by Mark Shapiro (see above); and *The Shabbat Seder,* by Ron Wolfson (Federation of Men's Clubs, 1986).

A Spiritual Shabbat Orientation

Beyond the specific rituals and practices lies the question of how we orient ourselves for Shabbat, a time of rest and renewal, a time for pleasure and the growth of the spirit. The tradition tells us that on Shabbat we are given an extra soul, a *neshamah yeteirah.* One understanding of this notion is that Shabbat enables us to have more of a sense of soulfulness. This can be created in a number of simple ways.

For one thing, our pace on Shabbat can be different from that of the week. Setting aside work, commitments, and responsibilities, there is no reason not to take a leisurely pace on Shabbat. Traditionally, it is forbidden to run on Shabbat. It is too worklike. Slow down. Walk. Have a leisurely breakfast. Spend time with those in your life with whom you are mostly passing ships during the week.

It is particularly helpful to begin Shabbat with a different pace. Often because of Shabbat preparation, the time before Shabbat begins can be hectic, getting everything ready to meet this last deadline of the week. As Shabbat starts, change your pace. When walking to synagogue (even if from the parking lot to the synagogue's door), stroll rather than walking briskly. One Hasidic rebbe was known to circle the synagogue seven times on Friday night before entering to prepare himself for the onset of Shabbat.

Slowing our pace can also help as we strive to be more aware—aware of the world, of the people in our lives, of ourselves. Ultimately it

can bring an awareness of all the gifts that God has given to each of us. Being mindful of God's gifts can lead to a mindfulness about the Presence of God, thus bringing us to a place where we fulfill the verse *Shiviti YHVH le-negdi tamid,* "I have placed God before me always" (Psalm 16:8).

Make Shabbat different by what you do. Reserve some special things that you only do on Shabbat. Let your conversation be different on Shabbat. Do not talk about weekday matters, especially work-related things. Do not use Shabbat to plan for things that are to happen during the week. Do not let the stress and obligations of the week creep into Shabbat, whether in thought or in speech.

The tradition's emphasis on the restrictions for Shabbat is a recognition of how difficult it can be to withstand the pressures of work. Deadlines can come up in work that tempt us to make exceptions and suspend our Shabbat for this week. Only a firm commitment can create the space for an ongoing Shabbat practice. In creating the space for Shabbat, include all the things you *need* to do, such as running errands, paying bills, fixing the broken door, straightening the house, etc., as activities to be avoided even if they don't violate the traditional categories of work.

Instead, some of us use Shabbat as a time to reflect on ourselves, to do a *heshbon ha-nefesh,* "self-examination" (see the previous chapter). Review the week for how well you did on your goals for the coming week; that is, work on yourself, not on the world. Others try to focus on the spiritual by studying the Torah portion or other Jewish texts, meditating, or singing.

Shabbat is a time for simplicity, but not asceticism. Fasting is forbidden on Shabbat. The physical world is not denied; rather, it is to be savored. We are to enjoy good food and wine. The tradition encourages couples to have sex on Friday night. Yet Shabbat discourages the acquiring of material things.

We turn inward on Shabbat. Accordingly, some people don't answer the phone or read their mail or e-mail, just so the world intrudes less on their lives.

If we try, we can cultivate the *neshamah yeteirah,* that extra measure of soulfulness, which is at the heart of the Shabbat experience.

Toward a New Definition of Shabbat

One final way to define Shabbat is to perceive it as a statement about our relationship with the world, with creation, and thus with the environment. At the beginning of this chapter, we talked about Shabbat as part of the weave of the universe. God asks us to rest on the seventh day, to cease from creating. Shabbat becomes a time to reflect on our creation and our world, a time to pause before we go hurtling on. The world can and must change, but it also needs to rest. For six days, we are meant to have an impact on the world. We strive to complete the creation left uncompleted by God in the first six days of creation. On the seventh day, we rest and rediscover our connection with the rest of the world. For it is said: "But the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, *your ox or your ass, or any of your cattle*. . . ." (Deut. 5:14).

The animals are to rest. If during the week we are the masters of the world or at least its movers and shakers, on Shabbat we are all part of creation. On Friday night we celebrate Shabbat as the climax of creation. In the Shabbat morning's liturgy, we declare that we observe Shabbat because God took us out of Egypt. Having once been freed, we strive to bring freedom to all people and to the whole world. Finally, on Shabbat afternoon, we move toward the messianic world of *atah ehad,* "You are One," Israel is one, we are all part of the Oneness of the world. We return to the garden, which we are to *shamor,* "watch" (Gen. 2:15), just as we are to *shamor,* "watch" Shabbat. The world and all its parts are in harmony once again, not at war, not competing, not striving. As it was, so shall it be again, with the lion lying down with the lamb. Therefore, even your animals are to rest on Shabbat.

Of course, we can no longer bring our technological world fully to a rest. Our homes and apartments still need heat, our refrigerators need cooling, and our rooms need light. However, the *halakhah* is very sensitive to these issues. It differentiates between those actions that cause a direct change in the environment from those that cause only an indirect change. These halakhic distinctions, as minute and even insignificant as they seem, can help us to create new models to enable us to leave our environment as untouched as possible during Shabbat.

New principles may lead us to depart at times from custom or even *halakhah*. The traditional food of Shabbat is chicken on Friday nights, and in many homes a *chulent* with meat for lunch. If Shabbat is to partake of the world to come, perhaps we should aspire to the vegetarianism of the Garden of Eden. Even if we continue to eat meat during the week, might we be vegetarians on Shabbat? This is not to advocate eating only raw fruit during Shabbat. Shabbat is still a day of joy and pleasure, not asceticism. Therefore, as in the traditional *halakhah,* we would still advocate the cooking and preparing of food before Shabbat begins. Certainly to cook food is to change our environment, but we must recognize that we live in an imperfect world. We acknowledge the complexity of that imperfection and our role in it as well by continuing to cook but doing so before Shabbat begins. Perhaps, by being vegetarians and not cooking on Shabbat, we show how we strive for the ideal of a world in harmony and balance with all its elements.

Using this environmental orientation might lead us to create a different hierarchy of values from the traditional *halakhah*. For example, painting a picture might seem less of a violation of Shabbat than using a sewing machine that runs by electricity. On the other hand, some of the traditional halakhic hierarchies are useful in thinking about Shabbat observance. For example, in terms of travel, a car is certainly forbidden. Riding a bicycle is only forbidden because of the concern that if it breaks down you will try to fix it.

More difficult for those who uphold the traditional *halakhah* is the issue of the use of fuel and electricity. Since lighting fire is forbidden on Shabbat, we are told by traditional authorities to turn on whatever lights, stove, etc., we want to use before Shabbat begins and leave them on for all of Shabbat. (Some people use timers to turn lights on and off on a preset basis.) The tradition obviously does not suggest sitting in darkness and eating only cold food in joyless celebration of this special day. Yet leaving lights on for the whole duration of Shabbat, or even having a timer shut them off after a lengthy period, is not energy-efficient. If we think ecology is very important, it would seem to call for

a departure from tradition, including the turning off and on of lights and the stove during Shabbat. These and other traditional halakhic definitions may aid us in reformulating new categories of forbidden activity on Shabbat.

Earlier, we discussed the concept of *muktzah,* those objects that you are not supposed to move or handle on Shabbat, such as money, pens, or a hammer. These objects are in general used for actions forbidden on Shabbat. There is another category of *muktzah,* which includes objects from the natural world, such as sticks and stones. There is a traditional explanation related to the issue of preparation for why objects that are not human-made are "inherently" *muktzah* and thus in their own category. One way to view this tradition of *muktzah* is that it calls on us to leave our world, particularly the natural world, as untouched as possible on Shabbat. To leave the rock where it is, to burn as little fuel as possible by not driving, to be conscious of our use of electricity, to not write on paper—all this lets the earth rest. It expresses our desire to pass through this day leaving as few human footprints as possible marking our passage in the sands of the natural world. On Shabbat, instead of trying to leave our mark on the world, we attempt to leave it as unmarked as humanly possible. We ask ourselves how much we can make this world, on this day, mirror the world to be, the world of perfect harmony between humans, animals, and plants—and the Holy One.

Emphasizing this aspect of Shabbat in many ways reinforces the meaning of the traditional Shabbat laws. When we avoid lighting fires, driving our cars, or shopping, we decrease our usage of our planet's natural resources. When we go for a walk, spend time with community and friends, wait for the stars to come out, or even just know when sunset is, we are in better touch with the natural cycles of the world. Shabbat is a day to stand in awe of the Creator and Her Creation, calling on us not just to rest, but also to live a simpler life. It is a time not just to step away from the "rat race," but also from a consumer culture with its visions of unlimited acquisition. As we rest, our tired world rests. We all stand a little closer to a garden, a place of nakedness rather than possessions, a place of being rather than owning.