

Towards Hope and Healing: A Havdallah for September 11, 2004

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That which is set apart from other things as “holy” is so distinguished only in order that it may imbue with holiness and consecration also every phase of life taking place beyond its confines. Light is set apart from darkness only so that it may give life and growth to the forces and materials that have gathered in the darkness...In the same manner, the Seventh Day was set apart from the six working days only so that its Sabbath spirit might permeate all of weekday life.

The Hirsch Siddur (Jerusalem/New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1972) page 567

Introduction:

Since ancient times, Jews have marked the end of the weekly *Shabbat*/Sabbath and the transition back to the weekday world with a beautiful ceremony called *Havdallah*, Hebrew for “Differentiating.” A brief but magical ritual that involves chanting, hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching, Havdallah is done every Saturday night after sundown, at home and/or in the synagogue, in a temporarily darkened space.

This year, September 11 falls on a Saturday/Shabbat, and members of the Jewish community will certainly focus our minds and hearts on the tragedies and losses of 2001, as well as on the state of the world in the three years since. We offer this expanded Havdallah ritual as a model for how one might incorporate the profound feelings and prayers evoked by September 11.

Three ritual objects are used in the Havdallah: A braided candle, lit right before the ritual; a full cup of wine/grape juice; and a spice box filled with cloves or other fragrant spices.

You might begin with an original kavvanah (a special meditation/reflection to direct one's focus) such as:

*We gather tonight, at the conclusion of Shabbat,
remembering the assaults and tragedies of 9/11,
recalling those who died, who were injured, and who lost close ones,
and searching for guidance, meaning, and hope
in a very troubled world.*

*As we join in this ritual of Havdallah,
we turn to You, to each other, and to ourselves
to bring the peace of Shabbat into the world,
to extend the hope and light of Shabbat into the week,
and to commit ourselves to the sacred pursuits
of life, liberty, peace, justice, joy, and healing.*

Leader -- Traditional Opening Prayer/Meditation:

**Behold! God is my *Yeshu'a*/Deliverance; I am confident, unafraid!
Adonai is my strength and my song/my might and my deliverance;
With great joy shall you draw from deep wells of deliverance! (Isaiah 12:2-3)
Deliverance is Adonai's; may Your blessing be on Your people! (Psalms 3:9)
Adonai *Tzva'ot* is with us; the God of Jacob is our Fortress. (Psalms 46:12)
Adonai *Tzva'ot*, blessed is the one who trusts in You. (Psalms 84:13)
Adonai, save us! Sovereign, answer us when we call! (Psalms 20:10)**

Everyone says the following line together, which is then repeated by the leader:

**“The Jews had light and joy, gladness and honor.” (Esther 8:16)
So may it be with us all!**

Leader continues:

I lift up the cup of deliverance, and call upon the name of Adonai. (Psalm 116:13)

Hold up the cup of wine or grape juice as the following is said, and then wait until the end of Havdallah to drink and pass the cup so all may drink:

**Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Who rules the Universe,
who creates the fruit of the vine.**

*As we tasted moments of joy this Shabbat and at other times,
so may we, our family and community, our society, our people, and all humankind,
enjoy times of ease and comfort, gladness and celebration, delight and happiness.*

Now take the spice box in hand:

**Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Who rules the Universe,
who creates varieties of spice.**

Pass the spice box around so all may smell its fragrance.

*May the sweet fragrance of Shabbat --
-- a taste of a more perfect time when none harm and none destroy --
revive our spirits when we are low,
rekindle hope in times of despair,
lingering with the promise of life and humanity,
someday soon, Whole and One.*

Now hold up your hands to the light of the candle:

**Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Who rules the Universe,
who creates the lights of fire.**

Turn your hands so the light is reflected in your nails, shadows reflected in your palms.

*May the words of our mouths and the meditations in our hearts
translate, this week and every week,
into deeds of love, justice, and harmony.*

*May the prayers of our hearts become beacons of commitment
to build a better world, and bring about an era of safety, security, trust, and peace.*

Traditional Concluding Blessing, after which all drink from the cup:

**Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,
Who has made creation with many distinctions --
between the sacred and the profane, between light and darkness,
between the people Israel and among all nations,
between the seventh day and the six days of work.
Blessed are You, Adonai,
Who differentiates the sacred from the profane.**

Two customs to conclude the ritual:

*Many Jews pour a small pool of wine or grape juice into a dish and extinguish the candle in this.

*Some Jews touch their index fingers to the remaining drops of wine or grape juice, and brush them across their (or a friend's) eyebrows and pockets, representing the wish that enlightenment, wisdom and prosperity may bless the coming week.

Seven Ancient Quotes for Entering the New Week

*We have selected these lines from classical Jewish literature,
either to be read aloud in a group setting, or used for quiet meditation and reflection:*

God has told you, O human, what is good, and what Adonai requires of you:
To do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

Psalms 30:6

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

Proverbs 29:18

As long as there is life, there is hope.
Rabbi Johanan, Jerusalem Talmud, Berakhot 9:1

In this world, there is no perfect joy, unmixed with anxiety;
no perfect pleasure, unmixed with envy;
but in the future,
the Holy Blessed One will make our joy and our pleasure perfect.

Pesikta deRav Kahana, Chapter 29

Hillel was wont to say:
"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
And if I am only for myself, what am I?
And if not now, when?"

Pirke Avot 1:14

It is not your obligation to complete the task,
but neither are you free to desist entirely from it.

Pirke Avot 2:21

...And Seven Quotes from the Past Century, for Entering the New Week

Can be read aloud in a group or used for quiet meditation and reflection.

Today is merely a bridge to tomorrow.

Franz Rosenzweig

The old must be renewed, and the new must be made *kadosh*/sacred.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

Miracles sometimes occur, but you have to work terribly hard for them.

Chaim Weizmann

A religious man
is a person who holds God and man in one thought at one time, at all times,
who suffers harm done to others,
whose greatest passion is compassion,
whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Blessed is the match, consumed in kindling flame.
Blessed is the flame that burns in the heart's secret places.

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O Lord, My God,
I pray that these things never end:
The sand and the sea,
The rush of the water,
The crash of the heavens,
The prayer of woman and man.

Hannah Senesh

To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.

Simone Weil

It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals,
because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out.
Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything
I still believe that people are really good at heart.
I simply can't build my hopes on a foundation of confusion, misery, and death.
I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness.
I hear the approaching thunder, I can feel the suffering of millions,
and yet, if I look up into the heavens,
I think that it will all come out right one of these days;
that this cruelty will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again.
In the meantime, I must hold on to my ideals
for perhaps the day will come
when I shall be able to carry them out.

Anne Frank

