



ABOUT OUR LEARNING MATERIALS

“And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.” *Genesis 2:3*

Shabbat. Each week we have the opportunity to gather together, to find comfort, to restore our souls. Shabbat is a reminder to create space in our lives for what is most important and sacred, to affirm our part in making the world more whole. Shabbat is a gift.

How do we create this holy gift each week? How might we deepen our understanding and practice of Shabbat? This year, journey with your Sh'ma group through learning materials which explore different aspects of Shabbat. You will discuss prayers, ancient and modern interpretations, reflections from Temple clergy and more.

As always, if you have any questions, please be in touch with Alexandra Horn (ahorn@tedallas.org) or Rabbi Kim Herzog Cohen (kherzogcohen@tedallas.org).

What is the Soul?

THE TALMUD TEACHES WE HAVE AN EXTRA SOUL ON SHABBAT.

Y'Did Nefesh

*Y'did nefesh, av harachaman,
m'shoch avd' cha el r'tzonecha.
Yarutz avd' cha k'mo ayal,
yishtachaveh el mul hadarecha.*

יְדִיד נֶפֶשׁ, אָב הַרַחֲמָן,
מְשׁוֹךְ עֲבָדְךָ אֶל רְצוֹנְךָ.
יָרוּץ עֲבָדְךָ כְּמוֹ אֵיִל,
יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶל מוֹל הַדָּרְךָ.

Heart's delight, Source of mercy, draw Your servant into Your arms:
I leap like a deer to stand in awe before You.

V'shamru

*V'shamru v'nei yisrael
et HaShabbat
laasot et HaShabbat l'dorotam
b'rit olam.
Beini u'vein b'nei Yisrael
ot hi l'olam,
ki sheishet yamim ash Adonai
et hashamayim v'et haaretz,
u'vayom hashvi-i shavat vayinafash.*

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת
לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרוֹתָם
בְּרִית עוֹלָם.
בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
אוֹת הִיא לְעוֹלָם,
כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה יי
אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ,
וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנְפָשׁ.

The people of Israel shall keep Shabbat,
observing Shabbat throughout the ages as a covenant for all time.
It is a sign for all time between Me and the people of Israel.
For in six days Adonai made heaven and earth,
and on the seventh day God ceased from work and was refreshed.

COMMENTARY

Dr. Erica Brown, *Take Your Soul to Work*, p.15

In some languages [Hebrew], the word for rest is related to the word for soul. A true rest reconnects us to our true selves, needs and desires. It gives expression to our sense of wonder. Decompress. Recharge. Nurture the soul.

Rabbi Kimberly Herzog Cohen

Rabbi Isaac Luria, a 16th century kabbalist who lived in Safed, Israel, created a mystical story of creation. Here's the essence of the story: the world begins whole, in balance, and filled with God's presence. As a first act of creation, God withdraws God's self. Through this process, vessels, which contain God's light, shatter into an infinite number of pieces. This world is left with broken shards of divine light, yearning to return to their original Source.

While the particulars of Lurianic kabbalah are quite complex, there is something resonant about these broken shards of divine light yearning for their Source. Perhaps we yearn for our lives to pause just enough to connect with the rhythm of our breath. Perhaps we (in our mind or aloud), call out to God with a deep yearning for guidance, strength, and patience. Shabbat is designed to

be, as Dr. Erica Brown suggests, a special vessel in time for our soul. Shabbat has a unique power, which our rabbinic tradition articulated through the notion of an “extra soul”—an extra soul which assists us in finding our way home, to our Source. We may discover that we are home through the light of family and community, the Shabbat prayers and songs, the sweet taste of challah, a walk along a tree lined path. However, not only in the hours of sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, but in sacred pauses all week long, we can express our deepest yearnings for our lives and our world to be made whole.

God, with each breath, help us to see your spark in all creation—from the worn lines on the faces of those we love to the faces of machines with their intricate pathways and tunnels. With each heartbeat, may the signposts of Your love guide our souls back to You.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does ‘soul’ mean to you?
2. Judaism teaches we have an extra soul on Shabbat. Why might that be a core belief? As Jews living in the modern world, how can we put that ‘extra soul’ to use? How might that change over time?