



The Havdalah Ceremony -

Distinguishing the Sacred from the Profane

וְלִהְבִּדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֹל וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטְּהוֹר:

You are to distinguish between the holy and the common,
and between the unclean and the clean.

- Leviticus 10:10

THE HAVDALAH (literally, “separation”) ceremony is observed at the end of Shabbat (on Saturday night when three stars are visible in the sky), in order to mark the distinction between the departing sacred day and the coming ordinary weekday. One way to begin your Havdalah ceremony is to go outside and look at the stars to behold the wonder of God’s creation.



The ceremony is usually celebrated at home with family or friends and includes three blessings -- over wine, spices, and light -- as well as the *hamavdil*, a blessing thanking God for separating the days and making the Shabbat sacred. Three components are required for the home ceremony:



1. A tall, braided candle with several wicks
2. A Kiddush cup of wine
3. A box filled with fragrant spices (*besamim*)





Opening Scriptures

The Havdalah ceremony usually begins with the recitation of a number of biblical verses commemorating God's salvation. For example, Isaiah 12:2-3 is often recited:

הִנֵּה אֵל יְשׁוּעָתִי אֵבֶתַח וְלֹא אֶפְחַד
 ef·chad ve·lo ev·tach ye·shu·'a·ti el hin·neh
 be afraid and not I will trust my salvation God is behold

כִּי־עֲזִי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה יֵהְיֶה לִּי לִישׁוּעָה:
 liy·shu·'ah vai·hi·li Adonai yah ve·zim·rat ki·'o·zi
 my salvation and He is to me is Lord God and my song for my strength

וּשְׁאַבְתֶּם־מַיִם בְּשִׂשׁוֹן מִמְעַיְנֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה:
 hai·shu·'ah mi·ma·ai·nei be·sa·son ush·'av·tem·mayim
 salvation from the wells of with joy you will draw water

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD Adonai is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. (Isaiah 12:2-3)

*Hinneih el yeshua'ti, evtach velo efchad,
 ki-oziv'zimrat yah, Adonai vaihili liyshu'ah
 ush'avtem-mayim be'sasson mi-ma'ainei haishu'ah.*

Psalm 116:13 is often recited:

כּוֹס־יְשׁוּעוֹת אֲשָׂא וּבִשְׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא
 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD
 Psalm 116:13

kos-yeshu'ot essa, uv'shem Adonai ekra.



Blessing over the wine

Just as Sabbath is welcomed with wine, so it is concluded with wine as well. We lift the Kiddush cup of wine and say the blessing, but do not drink from the cup at this time:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

ha·o·lam me·lekh e·lo·hei·nu Adonai at·tah ba·rukh
the universe King of our God Lord are You Blessed



בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

hag·ga·fen peri bo·re
the wine. fruit of Who creates

*Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe,
Who creates the fruit of the vine.*

*Barukh attah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
borei peri hagafen.*

Blessing over the spices

A special spice box filled with fragrant herbs (*besamim*) is used to represent the redolence of Shabbat (the spices commonly used are cloves, cinnamon, or bay leaves). Since smelling spices helps distinguish special fragrance from the more ordinary, part of the reason for the *besamim box* is to illustrate another separation of the sacred from the profane. The following blessing is said upon smelling the spice box:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

ha·o·lam me·lekh e·lo·hei·nu Adonai at·tah ba·rukh
the universe King of our God LORD are You Blessed



בוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי בְּשָׂמִים

ve·sa·mim mi·nei bo·re
different types of Creator of
spices



Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of different types of spices.

*Barukh attah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
borei minei ve-samim.*

Blessing over the fire

The Havdalah candle represents light, the first element created by God at the beginning of the first week. Lighting this candle is the first act of work permitted on the *yom khol*. After lighting, hold your hands close to the flame in order to see the reflection of the flame on our fingernails or the shadow on your palm. This light represents the light by which we can now work with our hands in the world around us. The following blessing is said upon considering the light:



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

ha'olam me lekh elo heinu Adonai attah barukh
the universe King of our God LORD are You Blessed

בּוֹרֵא מְאוֹרֵי הָאֵשׁ

ha'esh me'orei bore
the light of the fire Creator of

*Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe,
Creator of the light of fire.*

*Barukh attah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
borei me-orei ha-esh.*

The braided candle represents light, the first element referred to in Genesis at the beginning of the first week of creation. It also represents the creation of fire. A midrash teaches that, at the end of the first Shabbat, Adam was struck by fear with the coming of darkness. To abate this fear, God gave him knowledge and the tools to create fire, thus his fear was abated.



Hamavdil - the Havdalah Blessing Proper

The last blessing of the ceremony is the *hamavdil*, the blessing over the separation of different things. This blessing is recited over the Kiddush cup of wine using only the light of the Havdalah Candle:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
 ba-rukḥ at-tah yehōvāh e-lo-ḥei-nu me-lekh ha' o-lam
 Blessed are You LORD our God King of the universe

הַמְבַדִּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל, בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ,
 ham-mav-dil bein ko-desh le-chol, bein or le-cho-shekh
 Who separates between the holy and the profane, between light and darkness



בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים, בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
 bein yis-ra'el la'am-mim, bein yom ha-shev-i'i
 between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day

לְשֶׁשֶׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה
 le-she-shet ye-mei ha-ma'a-seh. ba-rukḥ at-tah yehōvāh
 and the six days of work. Blessed are You LORD

הַמְבַדִּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל. [אֲמֵן].
 ham-mav-dil bein ko-desh le-chol. [a-men].
 Who separates between the holy and the profane. Amen.

Blessed are You LORD our God, King of the universe, who distinguishes between the holy and the profane, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day and the six days of work. Blessed are You, LORD, who distinguishes between the holy and the profane. Amen.

*Barukh attah Adonai elhoheinu melekh ha-olam,
 hamavdil bein kodesh le-chol, bein 'or le-choshekh,
 bein yisrael la'amim, bein yom hashevi'i le-sheshet ye-mei hama'asheh.
 Barukh attah Adonai, hamavdil bein kodesh le-chol. Amen.*



AFTER THE BLESSING is completed, we spill a small amount of the wine from the Kiddush cup onto a plate (to symbolize the loss of Shabbat) and then drink from our cups. Finally, we extinguish the flame from the Havdallah candle by dipping it into the wine cup and listening to it sizzle. The room is now entirely dark. We turn on the lights and the sing the song *Eliyahu Hanavi* (“The Prophet Elijah”) and wish everyone present “*Shavu‘a Tov*” – a good week ahead!

שְׂבוּעָה טוֹבָה

S h a v u ‘ a T o v !