

A Humanistic *Havdalah*:

הַבְּדֵלָה הוֹמָנִיסְטִית

Making a Fresh Start, Making a Difference

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Leader:

Havdalah means "differentiation," the act of "making a difference."

Havdalah is the ceremony in which we contemplate the distinctions we make between the "special" day and the "common" day, between festival days and the everyday, between *Shabbat* and the rest of the days of the week.

Everyone (read together all the bold text in responsive readings):

The *Havdalah* ceremony heightens our awareness of the differences we make between days, between meanings, & between people.

Leader:

The visible presence of three stars in the night sky marks the transition of *Havdalah*.

Everyone:

With this *Havdalah* let us bring closure to *Shabbat*.

With this *Havdalah* let us make a fresh start in a new week.

With this *Havdalah* let us renew our efforts to make a difference in this world.

The Blessing of the Wine

Qiddush *Kos Y'shuah* *Hadadit*

קִדּוּשׁ כּוֹס יְשׁוּעָה הַדָּדִית

Dedication of the Cup of Mutual Aid & Prosperity

Leader:

In ancient Jewish culture, wine was a symbol of prosperity and good fortune. This wine blessing celebrates helping each other in our families, our friendships, and all our relationships.

Everyone:

**Let us bless our lives with community,
by sharing our joy, our spirit, & our bounty,
by inviting visitors to join us,
by welcoming the stranger,
by caring for those in need.**

The fruit of the vine - with it, let us drink "To Life!"

Leader:

P'ri ha-gaphen - 'ito, nishteh "L'-Haiyim!"

פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן - אֶתּוֹ נִשְׁתֶּה "לְחַיִּים!"

Everyone:

L'-Haiyim!

לְחַיִּים!

(Drink a toast with each other.)

Sam Ha-Haiyim - The Spice of Life - סַמֵּי חַיִּים

Leader:

The rest and simple pleasures of the Sabbath help us feel "extra soulful" - extra alive. Some Jews even believe that on *Shabbat* they get an "extra soul," *n'shamah y'terah*. Secular Humanists can poetically translate "*n'shamah y'terah*" as "extra breathing," since *Shabbes* can give us extra breathing room for living life to its fullest. Yet as each *Shabbat* ends, we return to our everyday lives of work & school & chores. Thus, the extra soulfulness - the extra breathing room - of *Shabbes* also goes.

As we mark the end of *Shabbat* with this *havdalah* service, we pass around and smell a ceremonial spice box, called a *hadas*. "*Hadas*" is the Hebrew word for the myrtle, a lovely aromatic shrub, the branches of which were passed around by our ancestors in their *havdalah* rituals. Folklore describes this custom as a remedy Jews used to revive and console themselves after they supposedly lost their "extra souls" at the end of each Sabbath.

In truth, smelling the spices comes from the practice of burning incense in ancient temples, both as an offering in itself and to cover the smells of other burning sacrifices. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE ("Common Era" or "AD"), burning anything during the Sabbath, including incense, was prohibited as a form of work. So people would light up their incense as soon as the Sabbath finished. However, as time past, incense was largely replaced first by the aromatic branches of the myrtle tree and then by spices, which increasing numbers of common people possessed for cooking. Among Jews, only Yemenites and a few others continue to use incense in their ceremonies.

Today, the *Havdalah* spice box contains a mix of spices, just as our communities contain a diversity of people. As we smell the blended sweetness of these spices, let us appreciate the lovely bouquet of the world's diversity and the expansive possibilities that we encounter with our extra *Shabbes* soulfulness and breathing room.

Let us also sense the bittersweet: entering the hurry of the work week, we so often lose our "extra soulfulness," our *Shabbes* consciousness, our appreciation of ourselves, each other, and the diversity of the world's wonders. Work is big part of life. Most everyone, except the richest of the rich, work for their bread. However, work must not be allowed to push out life. We need *Shabbes*. We need rest and beauty. We need to stop and smell the roses.

Blessing the "Spice of Life"

Everyone:

**As the sun sets,
let us extend the spirit of *Shabbes*
into our everyday lives.**

Leader:

Havdalah, differentiation, acknowledges the "spice of life."
Havdalah celebrates the diverse individualities and communities
that come from difference.

Everyone:

**Let us create a world of bread and roses and rainbows,
with many kinds of people, and
many kinds of spices.**

harbeh minei b'samim. הרבה מיני בשמים.

(Pass around the *hadas* spice box for everyone to smell.)

A Torch Song for the Sabbath Queen's Departure

Hadlaqat Ner Havdalah - Lighting the Candle of *Havdalah* - הַדְּלָקַת נֵר הַבְּדֻלָּה

Lighting fire is one of the most primal of human ceremonial actions.
Fire helped our earliest ancestors to see into the night, a time of great fear.
Flaming torches allowed them to ward off wild animals who sought to eat them.
With fire, they cooked food, worked metal, survived winters and ice ages.
Fire and its light became symbols of human hope.

**May this ceremonial fire
be a symbol of fear replaced by understanding
a symbol of hope forever rekindled.
Let us keep this fire within us,
fanning its flames in the hearts of all we meet.**

Ashkenazi Jews traditionally use a braided *Havdalah* candle with several wicks.
When lit, this candle looks like a torch, one of the most ancient forms of ceremonial fire.
The several braided wicks of the *Havdalah* candle can also be given a new meaning
as a symbol of diversity and interdependence, of synergy and mutuality.

**May this candle illumine our way toward a rainbow
of diverse people and animals and plants.
Let there be light - and warmth enough for all.**

B'rukhim tsiv'ei ha-qeshet
she-ro'im bim'orei ha-esh.

בְּרוּכִים צְבְעֵי הַקֶּשֶׁת
שְׂרוּאִים בְּמְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ.

Blessed are the colors of the rainbow that we see in the flames of the fire.

(A rainbow-colored *Havdalah* candle is lit.)

In this ceremony, as in everyday life, the flames of our passion for life and justice
are dampened and stifled by loss and sorrow, by wastefulness and excess.
The fire of this rainbow candle is now extinguished in wine.
The lost wine is a small sacrifice taken from our bounty -
taken by the "demons" of disempowerment and distraction, lipservice and inaction.

**May we bring the day when such "demons" are extinguished,
when the flames of life and love, of enlightenment and justice, forever burn brightly.**

(The candle is extinguished in the wine.)

Shavua *Tov* / *A Gute Vokh* / *A Good Week* (source unknown) אַ גוטע וואָך / אַ גוטע טוב / אַ גוטע טוב

Everyone sing: (Hebrew)

Have a good week:

a gute vokh / אַ גוטע וואָך (Yiddish);

buena semana / בואינה סימאנה (Ladino);

shavua tov / אַ גוטע טוב (Hebrew).

Have a good week, a week of peace, may gladness spread, and joy increase. (repeat)

Let's now wish each other a good week, "*Shavua* *tov*" - אַ גוטע טוב

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