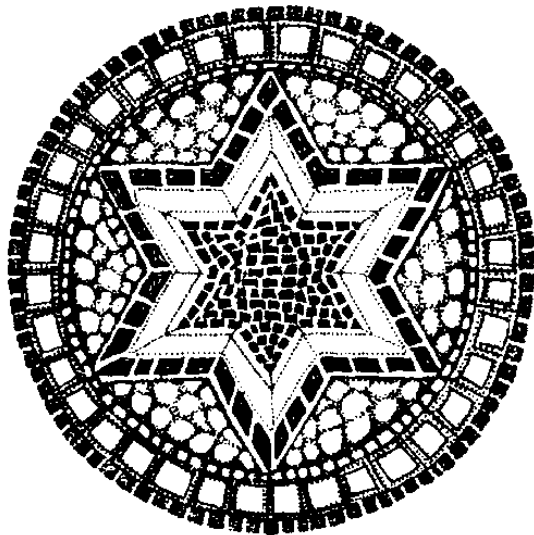


A Secular Humanistic *Havdalah*

הַבְּדֵלָה חִלּוּנִית הוֹמָנִיסְטִית

Making a Fresh Start, Making a Difference



**International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews
Tenth Biennial Conference - December 3-5, 2004
San Francisco, California, U.S.A.**

Making a Fresh Start, Making a Difference

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

קְדוּשַׁת 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!"

פְּרֵי 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 work everyday to make a difference,
striving to create a world of bread and roses and rainbows,
with many kinds of people, and
many kinds of spices.**

Leader:

harbeh minei b'samim. הַרְבֵּה מִיְּנֵי בְּשָׁמִים.

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

"We Shall Not Be Moved" (African-American spiritual; then anthem of Labor & Civil Rights Movements)

The song "We Shall Not Be Moved" draws upon the Hebrew Bible's Psalms (1.3) and prophetic book of Jeremiah (17.8) for its image of a hardy tree planted by sustaining waters. This tree, a living thing thriving on available resources, is a natural symbol of endurance, encouraging people to make use of whatever they have to face hardships even as they believe in and work for the improvement of life. An earlier African-American spiritual using this biblical tree image was transformed by the Southern Tenant Farmers Union in the 1930s into a political anthem which then spread throughout the Labor and Civil Rights Movements to become the song most often sung on picket lines, at rallies and civil disobedience actions. "We Shall Not Be Moved" has been sung and added to by several generations of activists, and it will continue to be sung by many generations to come in their struggles for justice. Let us stand up and sing it together now as we pass around and smell the *havdalah* spices, aromatic reminders of the value of human diversity, of every person, & of the "spice of life."

Everyone sing: (This version written by Rabbi Binyamin Biber, based on another by Pete Seeger.)

We shall not, we shall not be moved. We shall not, we shall not be moved.

Just like a tree that's planted by the water, we shall not be moved.

We're standing up for justice, and we shall not be moved. (2x)

Just like a tree that's planted by the water, we shall not be moved.

We're all colors together, and we shall not be moved. (2x)

Just like a tree that's planted by the water, we shall not be moved.

We're speaking out for peace, and we shall not be moved. (2x)

Just like a tree that's planted by the water, we shall not be moved.

We're gay and straight together, and we shall not be moved. (2x)

Just like a tree that's planted by the water, we shall not be moved.

We're every kind of people, and we shall not be moved. (2x)

Just like a tree that's planted by the water, we shall not be moved.

Too often superficial distinctions distract us
and we overlook deeper and more important elements of the human condition we share.
In her poem, "The Invitation," the Canadian poet Oriah Mountain Dreamer reminds us
to look beyond such insignificant differences -
toward those aspects of who we are that do make a difference.

"The Invitation" by Oriah Mountain Dreamer (from *The Invitation*, HarperCollins, 1999)

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living.
I want to know what you ache for,
and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are.
I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love,
for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon.
I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow,
if you have been opened by life's betrayals
or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain!
I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own,
without moving to hide it or fade it, or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own,
if you can dance with wildness
and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes
without cautioning us to be careful, to be realistic,
to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true.
I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself;
if you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul;
if you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see beauty even when it's not pretty, every day,
and if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine,
and still stand on the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, "Yes!"

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have.
I want to know if you can get up, after the night of grief and despair,
weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here.
I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me
and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied.
I want to know what sustains you, from the inside, when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself
and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

A Torch Song for the Sabbath Queen's Departure

Hadlaqat Ner Havdalah - Lighting the Candle of *Havdalah* - הדלקת נר הבדלה

Leader:

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.

Everyone:

**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.**

Leader:

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.

Everyone:

**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.**

Leader:

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

ברוכים צבעי הקשת
שרואים במאורי האש.

Everyone:

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

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

Leader:

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.

Everyone:

**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.)

"Have A Good Week" (original source unknown; this version by Rabbi Binyamin Biber)

Everyone sing: (Hebrew)

Have a good week:

a gute vokh / גוטע וואָך אַ (Yiddish);

buena semana / בואינה סימאנה (Ladino);

shavua tov / שבוע טוב (Hebrew).

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

Leader:

May our time together on this Sabbath and at this conference energize us to enter the week ahead - and many others that will follow - with new insights into ourselves and our Jewishness, and with a strengthened sense of connection and commitment to work together to bring forth the best that Jewish culture as to contribute to help foster the repair and improvement of the world, *tiggun olam*.

Let us conclude our *havdalah* ceremony now by wishing each other a good week.

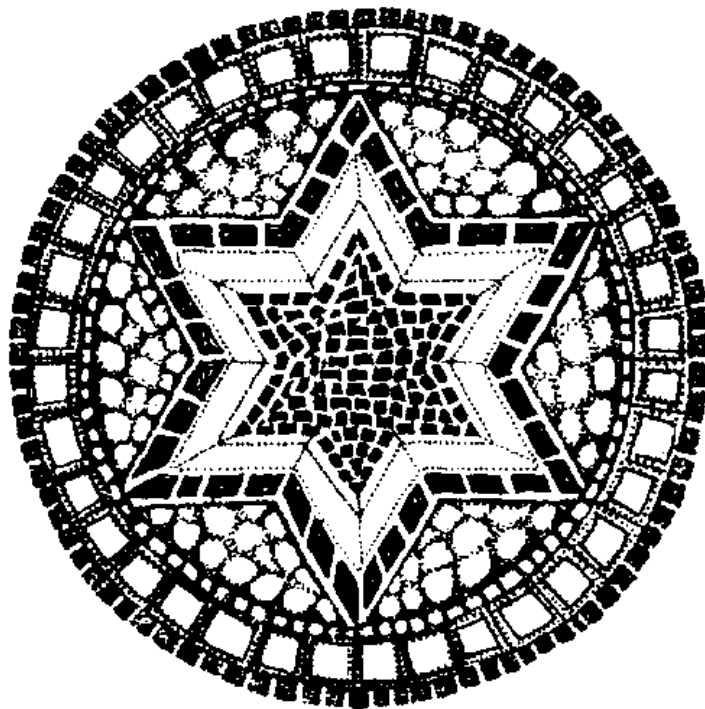
Shavua tov / שבוע טוב (Hebrew).

A gute vokh / גוטע וואָך אַ (Yiddish).

Buena semana / בואינה סימאנה (Ladino).

Have a good week.

The International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews is a coalition of community groups, schools, and national organizations involving 75,000 people in Israel, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Australia, Belgium, France, Italy, Sweden and the countries of the former Soviet Union. New Federation affiliates are presently emerging in England and South Africa.



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