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## Sanctuary in Time: Shabbat as the Soul of Modern Jewry and the Essence of “Doing” Judaism

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## SANCTUARY IN TIME

### Shabbat as the Soul of Modern Jewry and the Essence of “Doing” Judaism

*Treva G. Hatch and Loren D. Marks*

#### Foundations of Shabbat

According to the Hebrew Scriptures, Shabbat was established from the foundations of the world. It was the climax of God’s creation (Gen 1:1–2:3; Ex 20:11). God “hallowed” the seventh day “because on it, [He] rested from all the work that he had done in creation” (Gen 2:3, NRSV). Shabbat is also associated with the Exodus from Egypt (see Deut 5:12–15; cf. Ex 23:9–12). God commanded Israel to observe Shabbat as a remembrance that they “were slaves in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there” (Deut 5:15, NRSV). After the Exodus, Moses received the Law. In the Decalogue (i.e., “Ten Commandments”)—regarded as a summary of the entire Law—Shabbat is only one of two commandments of active observance (along with honoring one’s parents), and is the only day of remembrance. The remaining eight commandments are prohibitions (see Ex 20:1–17).

On the holy day of Shabbat, all of Israel—including slaves, resident foreigners, and even livestock—rested from all labor (Ex 20:8–11, 23:12; Deut 5:12–15). Shabbat was a sign of God’s covenant with Israel (Ex 31:13–17). The level of commitment to honor the covenant was reflected in the penalty for profaning it: death<sup>1</sup> (Ex 31:15, 35:2; Num 15:32–36).

Various temple rituals marked Shabbat as a day set apart from all other days, including special offerings (Num 28:9–10), twelve freshly baked loaves of bread for the sanctuary (Lev 24:8; 2 Chron 9:32), and songs (1 Chron 23:20–31; see, for example, Psalm 92, called “A Song for the Sabbath”). Several prophets warned that the fate of the nation, the building of the New Jerusalem in the messianic age, and the coming of the Messiah himself were all contingent on the nation properly observing Shabbat (Isa 56:2–6, 58:13–14; Jer 17:19–27; Ezek 20, 22:26; Neh 13:14–22).

Jews living many centuries after the destruction of the first temple (70 CE) and the exile to Babylon viewed Shabbat as an obligation to be observed with exactness, lest the nation suffer the same fate as their ancestors. Consequently, Shabbat became a prominent boundary marker for Jews during this time period (along with circumcision and dietary law observance), especially given that many of them lived in close proximity to non-Jews (e.g., Greeks and Romans). Just as earlier Israelite prophets expanded and reinterpreted Shabbat laws to adapt to changing contexts and needs of the people, so did Jews in the Greco-Roman period. For example, Jewish armies refused to fight on Shabbat and, consequently, suffered many lost lives

and afflictions at the hands of Antiochus's Greek armies in the second century BCE. Pious Jewish leaders subsequently altered Shabbat laws to permit fighting for defense of life (1 Macc 2:31–41, 9:32, 43–46). Sages Shemaya and Abtalion also concluded that preserving life takes precedence over Shabbat observance after they found Hillel the Elder frozen in the snow on Shabbat (Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 35b). The weekly sacred day of remembrance also became a source of conflict between various Jewish groups. They were not unified in their interpretation of Shabbat laws. According to the New Testament Gospels, the Pharisees—Israel's legal and moral leaders—were unwavering in their loyalty to the expansions of the written and oral Law, a position that thrust them into debates with first-century followers of Jesus (Hatch, 2019). Indeed, the sages in the first few centuries CE debated Shabbat among themselves, perhaps more than any other legal issue (Collins, 2016).

After the temple's destruction in 70 CE, Shabbat observance became even more central for Jews, preserving the Jewish nation in the absence of its temple and sacrificial system. What was primarily a space-oriented system of approaching the divine before 70 CE was later transformed into a time-oriented system, with a particular focus on Shabbat. In fact, Shabbat was conceptualized as the new temple. The Rabbinic sages produced an entire tractate dedicated to Shabbat laws (*Mishnah Shabbat*). In this code of law (c. 200 CE), the rabbis listed thirty-nine Sabbath prohibitions, all relating to common labor work. At a glance, these prohibitions seem random but on closer inspection they are understood in light of the Tabernacle's construction laws in Exodus 31. In this section, the instructions on building the Tabernacle are abruptly interrupted with a command to “keep the Sabbath ...; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from the people” (Ex 31:14–15, NRSV). The rabbis deduced from this section that all types of labor required to build the Tabernacle were forbidden on Shabbat. Thus, their list of thirty-nine Shabbat prohibitions reflected the type of work mentioned in Exodus 31 (Ginsburg, 1989; Green, 1980). The takeaway is that the rabbinic Shabbat laws (time-oriented piety) were closely linked with Israel's previous tabernacle/temple laws (space-oriented piety). As Arthur Green (1980) explained in his essay, “Sabbath as Temple”:

The history of exile teaches Israel that a sacred day, unlike a sacred mountain or a sacred shrine, may be carried anywhere and remain safe from outward attack. The hidden lesson here learned also inevitably points to the idea that any place where that Sabbath is proclaimed holy comes to have just a touch of Jerusalem [i.e., the temple] residing within it.

p. 303

As generations passed, the rabbinic sages attached increased significance and reverence to Shabbat. The Babylonian Talmud preserves a tradition of Rabbi Hanina who on the eve of Shabbat, donned his best clothing and said, “Come, and let us go forth to welcome the Queen Sabbath” (119a). Rabbi Yannai also dressed in his best clothing and, addressing Shabbat as if she were a human, said, “Come, O bride, Come, O bride!” (119a). Wedding imagery of Shabbat as a bride is further illustrated in *Pesikta Rabbati*, a midrashic text of around the sixth century. In the parable, Shabbat lamented that she had no partner like the other days of the week. Shabbat, being the odd day out, asked God why she has no partner, to which God replied, “Israel is your partner” (117b, cited in Montefiore and Leowe, 1963, p. 195). Some rabbis believed that the messianic age would not come until all of Israel observed at least two consecutive Sabbaths (Babylonian Talmud, 118a). This is why some Israeli rabbis claimed in 2020 that this year was a likely time for the coming messiah, as COVID-19 would force everyone indoors and, as a result, Jews everywhere would observe Shabbat (Jones, 2020).

## Theological and Mystical Expansions of Shabbat

Ginsburg (1989) explains the fundamental difference between the Shabbat conceptualizations of the rabbis in late antiquity and the mystics in medieval Europe: “For the Rabbis, the Sabbath was of heavenly origin, a gift *from* God. For most mystics, the Sabbath was even more sublime; it was an aspect *of* God” (p. 69). Just as Jerusalem is the center place of space, the navel of the universe, Shabbat was the Sacred Center, the navel of cosmic time. Time revolves around Shabbat. The mystics compared Shabbat to a central garden with a spring that overflows and nourishes all surrounding gardens—and referred to Shabbat as the middle stick on the menorah that provides light and energy to all other stems. Mystics also likened Shabbat to a wheel—the spokes representing the days of the week that are turned by the *central* components. Likewise, it was noted, Shabbat provided both light and lifeblood to the other six days of the week (Ginsburg, 1989).

Given this worldview, the mystics held Shabbat observance to be non-negotiable. If the Jewish people breached Shabbat, the well-being of the entire cosmos was threatened. The ripples from the Sacred Center (i.e., Shabbat) would explode outward, like the destructive waves of an atomic bomb, and demolish everything in its path. The mystics also intensified the earlier rabbinic imaging of Shabbat as a temple. Entering Shabbat became akin to entering the temple, and thereby raised the stakes for Jewish observance of the holy day. Shabbat observance held life and death implications for the mystics, undergirding their teaching that Shabbat must be protected at all costs: protection is ensured by proper observance.

How did these Shabbat conceptualizations translate to observance for many medieval mystics? Some mystics prepared for Shabbat by staying awake the entire night in sacred study on Shabbat Eve. They also immersed in the *mikvah* (ritual bath) on Friday afternoon. Rabbi Isaac Luria immersed twice, once to cleanse the body and soul to receive Shabbat, and again for the additional soul that is added to the observant Jew on Shabbat. After immersion, mystics would typically dress in their best clothing.<sup>2</sup>

The motif of Shabbat as a temple is revealed in many customs of the medieval mystics. The Shabbat meal table came to symbolize the altar of the temple. Washing hands before eating and the inclusion of twelve loaves of bread on the table (among others) reflected Israelite tabernacle/temple customs. Some mystics even folded the loaves to resemble the shewbread of the ancient temple. Some mystics were careful not to engage in idle talk or discuss business matters on Shabbat (Faiierstein, 2013). They maintained that the forces of evil were restrained on Shabbat but that they were released after its conclusion. The freed demons would then attempt to stamp out the light that emanated from the Sacred Center:

At the close of the Sabbath, during the transition from the sacred to the profane, from light to darkness ... the Holy One, blessed be He, and His *Shekhinah* [presence] take off the sacred garments of the Sabbath, and clothe themselves once more in secular garments. ... The fire of [the underworld] is rekindled and ... evil spirits burst from the hiding places to which they were consigned at the approach of the Sabbath. When the Sabbath departs, many hosts and companies fly through the world. ... They go out in haste, thinking to rule the world and the holy people. Demonic darkness and great terror fill the world, and at that moment the radiance of the additional soul disappears and man's soul is left naked, and when the Sabbath departs, the bond is broken, and the additional soul ascends, and soul and spirit remain separated, grief stricken.

*Tishby, 1991, pp. 1236–1237*

These practices illustrate how Shabbat theology fostered a hyper-attentiveness of the mystics to sanctify Shabbat and to set it apart from all other days.

In more modern times, Jewish thinkers continued to articulate the significance of Shabbat with great zeal and respect. In the 1950s, Herman Wouk introduced Judaism to Christians and non-observant Jews in the first printing of the now classic volume, *This Is My God: The Jewish Way of Life*. He articulated that Shabbat is “a ceremony,” a “dramatic” and “immemorial gesture” of celebration (Wouk, 1987, pp. 44, 49). A celebration of what? “All nations celebrate the day of their coming into being with a work stoppage and ceremonies. The Jews, who believe that God created the universe, celebrate its coming into being, and give thanks to its Maker, once a week” (Wouk, 1987, p. 49). For Wouk, Shabbat is not only a day of commemoration, but a foretaste of the messianic age.

Another influential thinker in the 1950s, Abraham Joshua Heschel, attempted to articulate the meaning of Shabbat for the modern Jew in his book, *The Sabbath*. He explained that Judaism conditions its adherents to cling to “holiness in time,” not space. Judaism’s “Sabbaths are our great cathedrals” and Jewish Shabbat ritual itself is “*architecture of time*” (Heschel, 1951, p. 8). For Heschel (1951), God gifted to the world through Judaism the idea that holiness is best associated with time; this is why “there is no mention of a sacred place in the Ten Commandments” (p. 79). He posited that just as the life of a Jew is a pilgrimage to the World to Come, so too is the week of a Jew a pilgrimage to Shabbat—a pilgrimage where one “seeks to displace the coveting of things in space for coveting the things in time—to covet the seventh day all days of the week” (pp. 90–91). Heschel further asks whether any institution is better positioned to improve the state of humanity than Shabbat:

To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we would not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence of external obligations, a day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization, a day on which we use no money, a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow men and the forces of nature—is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for [humanity’s] progress than the Sabbath?

p. 28

The biblical and ancient near eastern origins, the classical rabbis’ emphases, the medieval mystical expansions, and the modern theologians’ articulations of Shabbat provide context for how Jews in the 21st century relate to this holy day in contemporary lived religious experience.

### Shabbat in Lived Religious Experience

Social scientists who study modern Jewry have noticed in recent decades that Judaism has shifted to a home-based system. In their study of American Jewish identity, Cohen and Eisen (2000) posited that the institution of the home, as opposed to the community, is playing a greater role for young Jews in observing their cultural and religious traditions. They also observed that Jewish young adults seem to be distancing themselves from the “organizations, institutions, and causes that used to anchor identity and shape behavior” (p. 2). Goldscheider (2004) similarly acknowledged that Jews have become “less attached to . . . institutions” (p. 100), and that home-based observance with family has become “a central feature of Jewish continuity” (p. 127).

The practice that has perhaps benefited most from this shift to home-based Judaism is Shabbat. One Pew survey (2013) revealed that nearly half of American Jews (45%) who have a

Jewish spouse reported that they *always or usually* light Sabbath candles. Had the survey included other Shabbat traditions, like sharing family meals, the percentage would likely have been higher. In lengthy interviews with thirty diverse American Jewish families, twenty-eight (93%) spontaneously mentioned Shabbat more than any other cultural or religious practice (Hatch, 2015; Marks, Hatch, & Dollahite, 2017). Further, when asked, *what practices or observances hold special meaning for you as a couple or family*, nineteen families (63%) mentioned Shabbat. Cohen and Eisen (2000) identified a similar emphasis on Shabbat in their study on American Jews. Throughout all of their interviews, they heard “exactly one disparaging remark about Sabbath observance,” while most of their other participants placed high value on this day of commemoration (p. 86). Even many agnostic-atheist Jews observe Shabbat. One Conservative Jewish woman who was interviewed for the American Families of Faith Project (AFF)<sup>3</sup> explained: “I have a lot of friends who don’t believe in God who celebrate Shabbat every Friday” (Hatch, 2015, p. 88).

### Shabbat at Home: The Basics of Observance

Since its earliest days, Shabbat and its accompanying laws were ever expanding, so much so that even the sages in the second century acknowledged that the laws of Shabbat “are like mountains hanging by a string,” meaning there is “little scriptural” support for the “many laws” (*Mishna Hagigah* 1:8, translation in Neusner, 1988, p. 130). This situation has presented challenges for the Jewish community. It is, perhaps, why for every “two Jews there are three opinions,” as the popular saying goes. Nearly every aspect of Shabbat exists on a wide-ranging spectrum across branches and styles of observance.

On Friday morning, as Shabbat approaches, observant Jews are faced with many preparation tasks. Blu Greenberg (1983) in her book, *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household*, allocated seventy pages to Shabbat alone. In traditional households, preparation begins with cleaning the home. The sweeping, vacuuming, dusting, laundering, snow shoveling, garden weeding, tomato picking, polishing of dinnerware, and organizing of any kind must be completed long before Shabbat begins at sunset on Friday evening. After the cleaning, the Shabbat meal must be either cooked or purchased (and retrieved or delivered). Grocery shopping, cooking, and even smaller tasks like chilling the wine, require careful planning and appropriately allotted time. Setting the Shabbat table with its specific items also requires attention (Greenberg, 1983). The preparation does not end there. The host turns off most appliances, unscrews lightbulbs to avoid inadvertently turning on lights after Shabbat begins, and sets timers on all necessary lights. If hosting a non-observant guest who might flick off the light switch in the bathroom, the host might tape the switch to the “on” position before guests arrive. Some Jews pre-tear facial tissues, bathroom toilet paper, and paper towels. Shabbat preparation also includes personal hygiene, such as pressing clothing, polishing shoes, and bathing (Greenberg, 1983).

Justification for these many tasks comes from Jewish law in antiquity that prohibits work, which includes starting or extinguishing fires, ripping or tearing materials, baking, and many other forms of work. Flicking a light or turning on a smartphone causes electron action that is equivalent to starting a fire. Some non-observant Jews, and many Christians have criticized some Orthodox Jews for missing the point. Greenberg (1983) responded to these common accusations:

To one who is completely unfamiliar with the law, it almost seems petty and silly to go to such lengths over such a little thing as throwing a light switch. But this is one of the many basic steps in creating that special aura of Shabbat. ... Preparing paper in advance seems so remote from holy time. The objective outsider might say:

“This is pure legalism and highly ridiculous ... there’s no work involved in tearing a piece of perforated toilet paper on the Sabbath.” To which an insider might respond, “Look how clever the Rabbis were: even in as mundane a place as a bathroom, one is reminded of the uniqueness of the day.”

Greenberg, 1983, pp. 39, 40

Shabbat is ushered in by a candle-lighting ceremony. Candles are lit several minutes before sunset. The prevalent custom is that two candles are lit, representing the two imperative verbs in the two versions of the Ten Commandments in “Remember” (Exodus 20:8) and “Observe” (Deut 5:12). Some light additional candles, one for each member of the family. Tradition stipulates that women light the candles and usher in Shabbat (Klein, 1992; Greenberg, 1983). The candle-lighting ceremony and subsequent rituals of the meal and family time are accompanied by special blessings—blessings of gratitude for Shabbat and family, and even special blessings on the children. After the Shabbat meal, both on Friday evening and after Synagogue service on Saturday morning and afternoon, the family typically engages in various quiet activities such as board games, napping, and Torah study (Greenberg, 1983). Many husbands and wives engage in sexual activity on Shabbat. Indeed, this is viewed as a commandment by some Jews. This practice is traced as far back as the twelfth century in the writings of Maimonides: “Sexual relations are considered a dimension of Sabbath pleasure. Therefore, Torah scholars [i.e., all observant men] who are healthy set aside Friday night as the night when they fulfill their conjugal duties” (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 30:14).

There are far too many practices and traditions to review here but, again, one must remember that these traditions vary widely from movement to movement (e.g., Ultra-Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, etc.) and even from group to group within the same broader movement. Rabbi Isaac Klein details many of these same Shabbat traditions from the point of view of the Conservative Movement in his work, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice* (1992). Particulars of observance are in perennial flux. Since the 1980s and 1990s, the Jewish community has seen Ultra-Orthodox become more stringent on some matters while the more liberal movements have tended to become increasingly lenient or nuanced.

### Shabbat at Home: Meaning Making, Identity, and Tradition

The previous section reviewed briefly some of the functions and rituals of Shabbat. But how are these functions and rituals conceptualized by those who actually perform them? And what social, cultural, or spiritual benefits do these practices reportedly yield? The common benefits revealed in various surveys and qualitative studies are related to identify formation, perpetuation of tradition, peace and relaxation, and family unity.

One woman in the Cohen and Eisen (2000) survey explained how she began lighting Shabbat candles. Her aging mother lamented that her candles—first owned by her mother—would not be used after she died because her daughter was non-observant. “Whereas in the past I might have felt guilty,” she explained, “this time I sort of reacted with more sympathy about her feelings and her sense of self. This was important to her, and she wanted this part of her carried on. So I said, ‘I’ll light them.’” Her husband welcomed the new practice because it was now infused with meaning and purpose: “It was about our relationship and it was even more wonderful because it was about my grandmother and because it was about the culture and being Jewish” (Cohen & Eisen, 2000, p. 81).

A middle-aged Conservative mother in the American Families of Faith survey also found deep meaning in lighting candles for tradition’s sake: “[We light candles] because it’s what [my]

mother does and [my] grandmothers [did]. It is because all Jewish women that light candles on Friday night are saying blessings at the same time. ... It's very special" (Hatch, 2015, p. 89). A Reform mother expressed a similar connection to the candle-lighting tradition. She used candlesticks that her grandmother and mother owned, and she planned to pass them on to her daughter: "Whether she uses them to light Shabbat candles or not, I don't know but that's really, really important to me" (Hatch, 2015, p. 89). A Conservative couple with two children commented on lighting candles in more detail:

HUSBAND: I'm really affixed by the links we have with our early ancestors in Judaism. ... When we celebrate Shabbat on Friday night, we are doing the same thing my relatives did thousands of years ago. That intrigues me. We light candles at my Mom's house that our family has been lighting for two hundred years. That's amazing. ... I don't know that the Sabbath meal is a religious experience for most people but for me, it's the heart of religion.

WIFE: We light candles every Friday night to welcome the Sabbath and I use two sets of candlesticks. One was given to us for our wedding and the other was my grandmother's that she used for I don't know how long. And then my husband's parents use a set of candlesticks that has been in my father-in-law's family for maybe two hundred years or so. And they've been passed down and polished, and my mother-in-law was saying that when they're gone the candlesticks will be passed down to us. The important thing is that in each generation, they are always passed down to the child who lights the candles every Friday night. Something like that, I think, is just incredible ... the connection you feel with your family, with your people, and your history.

*Hatch, 2015, p. 90*

Tradition and heritage is powerful for many Jews. It adds meaning and salience to the traditions. Observant Jews also find practical and personal benefits of Shabbat. One such benefit is peace, serenity, and relaxation. A Modern Orthodox mother discussed how Sabbath is not just about doing or performing rituals, such as lighting candles or saying blessings, but is about avoiding stressful thoughts:

It's funny, there's all this stressful air before Shabbat, getting ready and all this, and then you light the candles. Everything does change. And you know the laws about Shabbat, you're not even supposed to be thinking anything stressful, let alone talking about anything stressful. It's like you leave all the stresses of the rest of the week behind ... and the kids are always very excited about it. They know that no one's going anywhere, no one's answering the phone, no one's driving anywhere, that we're just going to be here as a family.

A middle-aged Conservative father emphasized that Shabbat can help people reclaim their lives. Too many people "run everywhere and Shabbat is just one more day to run everywhere, and you know what? Your life is stolen from you." He explained that by having Shabbat, "We reclaim our lives, even if for a day, it's enough to get our bearings back and that is enough to sustain you throughout the week" (Hatch, 2015, p. 92).

Another benefit is that Shabbat protects family time. A twenty-year-old Orthodox man explained that observing Shabbat is non-negotiable, not because of Jewish law or "religious purposes," but for "the family's sake." He said, "It's such a big deal on a family level that that's

not something you can cut out” (Marks, Hatch, & Dollahite, 2017, p. 6). A Conservative mother of three discussed her children’s relationship to Shabbat:

The kids know Friday night is Shabbat. They don’t make plans. They know it’s Shabbat. I’ll pick them up from school [and] they’ll be like “Tonight’s Shabbat. Who’s coming?” They’re always asking. The older one said to me the other night, “I love Shabbat.”

*Marks, Hatch, & Dollahite, 2017, pp. 7–8.*

A Conservative mother explained what Shabbat means most to her as she sits across the table from her family:

We’ve had a busy week and here’s our time to be together and we always take a deep breath before we do this and let all the thoughts, craziness and worries, and everything slip away. ... I think that when we take the time out, when we light the candles Friday night, that’s a time that I feel really close to them. ... When we sit across the table from each other, my husband and I, and the candles are lit, and you see the kids, there is something you get from that that is so deep. It’s just a feeling that all is right in the world ... it doesn’t matter what else is going on. Right in that circle ... it’s awe-inspiring. That’s what it means to me.

*Hatch, 2015, p. 93*

## Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has not solely been on the rituals and practices of Shabbat, but also on how Jews attach meaning to them and how these observances might foster strong Jewish identity. Jews ranging from agnostic-atheist to the most Ultra-Orthodox seem to have found some benefits from observing Shabbat at some level. Shabbat meaning-making across all forms of Jewry has, arguably, played a major role in preserving the Jewish people. Just as the temple and Torah preserved the Jewish nation in ancient times, Shabbat and Torah have preserved the Jewish nation since the Greco-Roman era. This fact reminds us of the famous dictum of the Hebrew poet and philosopher, Achad Ha’am: “More than Jews have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews” (Ha’am, n.d.)

A major question for social scientists who study the Jewish demographic centers on *how* Shabbat “keeps the Jews.” Does ritual and habitual practice by itself foster Jewish identity, or must these rituals be meaningful? Sociologist and scholar of Jewish studies, Ellen LeVee, addresses this question about the meanings and functions of Shabbat by asking, “Can simply performing a ritual for the sake of family health, make the family healthy?” Responding to this question in connection with Shabbat ritual, she then wrote,

I want to distinguish between meaning and function. The functions of the Sabbath ... may or may not be its meaning. The more its meaning relies solely on these functions, the less able it is to perform them. ... Shabbat, through its functions, may be satisfying, but it simply doesn’t have enough authority of its own. It can be trumped by other personal desires. True meaning emerges when Shabbat is put in the context of what is ultimate in life. ... Ultimacy gives Shabbat meaning, and thereby allows for it to fulfill the other functions.

*Marks, Hatch, & Dollahite, 2017, p. 12*

Indeed, origins, history, tradition, function, and ultimacy all influence how and why Shabbat impacts Jewish families—and what Shabbat means to the Jewish people.

## Notes

- 1 We note that this penalty was strictly conceptual, not reality; it was an explanation of later scribes who redacted the Hebrew Scriptures. The books of the Prophets, early Jewish literature, and records of medieval Jewish communities contain numerous examples of Jews profaning Shabbat with no punishment of death.
- 2 The mystics of Safed, a town in the Galilee, wore white garments, representing either the priestly temple garments, or the garments of light worn by Adam and Eve in Eden. The practice of wearing white garments on Shabbat began to fade in the late early modern period because opponents of mystical interpretations of Judaism viewed the practice as elitist and arrogant. The mystics also discouraged red or black clothing on Shabbat because these colors represented the forces of evil (Faierstein, 2013). These practices have since waned in western (i.e., Ashkenazi) Jewish communities as many Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews now wear black, even on Shabbat.
- 3 The American Families of Faith project (AFF) is a strengths-based approach to garner information regarding healthy processes. Specifically, the directors and scholars of the AFF project attended Jewish religious services, visited with rabbis, explained the project, and requested referrals for exemplar families. The total sample for this article was 30 families (N = 77 individuals; 30 wives/mothers, 30 husbands/fathers, and 17 adolescent children). Couples had been married for an average of slightly more than 20 years (range = 8–25 years) and identified as Orthodox (9), Conservative (5), Reform (14), with two unspecified. Families resided in five regions: New England (MA); Mid-Atlantic (DE, NJ); Pacific (CA); Mountain West (UT); and Gulf Coast (FL, LA). Wives' ages ranged from 35 to 59 (mean age = 46), husbands' ages ranged from 32 to 58 (mean age = 48), and ages of interviewed children ranged from 10 to 20 (mean age = 16). See <https://americanfamiliesoffaith.byu.edu/>.

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