

Welcoming the Seventh Day: Metaphors of Shabbat

Read the following images and descriptions of God. Can you imagine turning time into one of these ideas?

Bride

Shabbat is often personified as a bride in prayers and other texts.

Lecha dodi likrat kallah p'nei Shabbat nekabelah

Come, my beloved, let us greet the bride, let us welcome the face of Shabbat.

-Lecha Dodi prayer

Queen

Similarly, Shabbat is also sometimes personified as a queen

HaChama Mairosh HaElanot Nistalka, Bo'ooch Vinetzeh Likrat Shabbat Hamalka.

The sun on the tree-tops no longer is seen,

Come, gather to welcome the Sabbath, our Queen.

-Chaim Nachman Bialik

Palace In Time

The seventh day is a palace in time which we build. It is made of soul, of joy and reticence.- Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Day of Welcoming Angels

In the Talmud (Shabbat 119b), Rabbi Yosi the son of Judah says:

- On the eve of Shabbat, two angels accompany a person home from the synagogue. One angel represents the positive and one angel represents the negative. When the person arrives home and their home is prepared for Shabbat – then the positive angel says “May it be thus for another Shabbat!” The negative angel must say “Amen.” If, however, the house is not ready for Shabbat, the negative angel says “May it be thus for another Shabbat!” The positive angel must say “Amen.”

From here, we have the tradition of singing the song “Shalom Aleichem:”

Shalom aleichem, malachei ha'sharayt, malachei elyon, mi'melech malchei ha'mlachim, HaKadosh Baruch Hoo.

Peace be unto you, ministering angels, messengers of the Most High, the Sovereign of sovereigns, the Holy Blessed One

Day of celebrating freedom from slavery in Egypt

זְכֹרֶתְךָ כִּי-עֲבַדְתָּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצִיאֲךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִמִּשְׁלַב בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה עַל-כֵּן צִוְּךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-יּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת: (ו)

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the sabbath day. - Version of the 10 Commandments found in Deuteronomy 5:15

Day of celebrating the completion of the creation of the world

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְכַל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר-בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת: (פ)

And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that God had done. - Genesis 2:3 and Friday night Kiddush prayer

A Delight (Oneg Shabbat)

The book of Isaiah (58:13) says “You shall call Shabbat a delight (in the Hebrew, Oneg).”

A Taste of the World to Come (Me'ein Olam Habah)

There is a tradition that Shabbat is thought of as 1/60 of Olam Habah, the World to Come, which is a Jewish version of the afterlife. Some believe that acts of kindness are rewarded in Olam Habah. Shabbat is simply a small taste of that realm.

Day of the Extra Soul: Neshama yeteira

This is a kabbalistic idea (also taught in the Talmud) that on Shabbat, a person is awarded an extra soul that remains with them throughout Shabbat and departs at Havdallah.

Sacred Time (Shabbat Kodesh)

Shabbat is often referred to as sacred or holy time. Another meaning of the word kodesh, or kadosh, is separate or apart. Shabbat is a different kind of day.



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What did your week look like? Who is Shabbat for you this week?