

## The Liturgy of Welcoming Shabbat and Family Relationships

Mirosław Rucki

Kazimierz Pulaski University of Technology and Humanities in Radom  
[miroslaw.rucki@gmail.com](mailto:miroslaw.rucki@gmail.com)

For centuries, Jewish families have gathered on Friday evenings in order to welcome Shabbat, the most important holiday in Judaism, together. Over time, a canon of prayers and liturgical activities shared by most Jews has evolved. Without a doubt, this domestic liturgy has led to the building of family ties and the strengthening of the feeling of identity. It is sometimes said that it was not the Jews who have preserved Shabbat so much as Shabbat has preserved the Jews.

This article is an analysis of typical texts of the liturgy of welcoming Shabbat with respect to their impact on family relations. I will discuss various procedures and words said in the order in which they appear in a typical prayer book, the *Sefer Habrachot*: the lighting of candles and appropriate blessings, the greeting of angels, the *Kiddush*, the meal, and songs. In conclusion, I present in detail the most important factors that are conducive to the strengthening of family ties. It seems that these observations can be an inspiration for common prayer and the celebration of Sunday in Christian families, especially since Christianity organically flows from the tradition of Judaism.

### 1. The Commandment to Celebrate Shabbat

“Shabbat,” the name of the seventh day, is related to God’s rest on the seventh day after creating the world, when He ceased *נָפַשׁ shavat*) to work entirely (Genesis 2: 3). The word *נָפַשׁ shabat* appears in the Hebrew Bible 111 times. In the New Testament, meanwhile, it appears in the form *σάββατον* sixty-eight times. In accordance with the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, in Judaism it is traditionally accepted that the day begins in the evening after sunset; hence, Shabbat begins on Friday evening.

There are many publications about Shabbat, its theological motivations, meaning, history, and religious rituals.<sup>1</sup> The event of the exodus from Egypt is considered to be the key moment when the Israelites begin to celebrate Shabbat:

The Book of Deuteronomy considers liberation from the Egyptian yoke to be a kind of new creation. Thanks to it, we can look for an analogy to the motif of creation that appears in the rationale for the necessity of celebrating Shabbat in Exodus 20 : 8–11. In reality, the exodus from Egypt meant the creation of the people of God as a nation. When the Israelites were still slaves in Egypt and did not have a designated day of rest from constant, exhausting work, God's liberation made them the nation for whom Shabbat played the role of a day of rest, when this great event was recalled with gratitude. [...] The reason why the Israelites should celebrate Shabbat is clear: God freed the Israelites from Egypt and each Shabbat should serve to remind them that He is the God of liberation.<sup>2</sup>

On the basis of the Bible, rabbis came up with 1,521 rules related to the celebration of Shabbat.<sup>3</sup> The best-known commandment is the prohibition against doing “any work” motivated by the fact that “in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested” (Exodus 20 : 10–11). However, the concept “any work” has not been precisely described by the lawgiver; hence the future controversies and conflicts that also resonate in the Gospels.<sup>4</sup> In the treatise *Shabbat* 6b, the Babylonian Talmud mentions thirty-nine activities that are prohibited on Shabbat.

Nowak emphasizes that apart from the purely religious dimension, the institution of Shabbat and the related rituals were factors that forged community and in an essential way shaped the identity of the members of the

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1 E.g. M. Rosik, *Jezus a judaizm w świetle Ewangelii według św. Marka*, Vocatio, Warszawa 2004, p. 170–181; *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 1–8, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1984–2018.

2 P. Przyborek, *Szabat w Łukaszej narracji o nauczaniu Jezusa w synagodze w Nazarecie (4, 16–30)*, „Studia Gdańskie” 31 (2012), p. 47–65.

3 V. Buksbazen, *Ewangelia zawarta w świętach Izraela*, Wyższe Baptistyczne Seminarium Teologiczne, Warszawa 2005, p. 75.

4 M. Rucki, *Uzdrowienie niewidomego – podwójny dowód boskości Jezusa Chrystusa*, „Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny” 24 (2016) no. 2, p. 23–38.

Jewish community.<sup>5</sup> The *Jewish Encyclopedia* describes a traditional beginning of the domestic Shabbat liturgy as follows:

At the conclusion of the services in the synagogue with the orphans' *Kaddish*, the attendants hurried to their homes, where upon crossing the threshold they recited the prayer, „Peace be with ye, ye ministering angels,” etc. (comp. Shab. 119b, for the reason why the angels were apostrophized). This prayer was preceded by the greeting „Good Shabbat,” which was also exchanged on the way with passers-by; it was followed by the recital, on the part of the husband, of Prov. xxxi. 10 et seq., verses laudatory of the good housewife; after which the younger members of the family were blessed by their parents; the elder sons having received this benediction in the synagogue, where the rabbi was wont to bless all the young people of the congregation. Every family had, as a rule, a stranger as its guest, who had been to the synagogue and had been invited to participate in the celebration of the Sabbath.<sup>6</sup>

Rabbi Shraga Simmons explains the unique significance of celebrating Shabbat in the following way:

Shabbat is at the very center of Jewish consciousness. It is the only ritual observance which is part of the Ten Commandments and is one of the greatest sources of Jewish inspiration.<sup>7</sup>

Next, Rabbi Simmons describes the most important activities related to the celebration of Shabbat:

1. The lighting of candles as the timeless symbol of Judaism;
2. Honoring Shabbat by preparing the tastiest meals, dressing nicely; and sprucing up the home;
3. The *Kiddush* (the blessing of wine) and holiday meals, which contain such liturgical activities as prayer, reading excerpts from Sacred Scripture, giving blessings to children, the washing of hands, discussion of the Torah, and the final thanksgiving for the consumed meal;
4. Rest during Shabbat tied to pleasure;
5. Prayer, both that at the beginning of Shabbat in one's family and later participation in morning services (*Shacharit*) in the synagogue.

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5 D. Nowak, *Ktizeologiczna perspektywa uzdrowienia w szabat człowieka z uszlą ręką (Łk 6, 6–11)*, „Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego” 31 (2011), p. 195–212.

6 *Jewish Encyclopedia*, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12962-sabbath> (17.12.2017).

7 S. Simmons, *Shabbat*, <http://www.aish.com/jl/jewish-law/daily-living/36-Shabbat.html?s=srcon> (17.12.2017).

As a rule, in Judaism all the liturgical texts are recited through song, which gives them an additional flavor.

## 2. The Liturgy of the Greeting of Shabbat in the *Sefer Habrachot* Book

The *Sefer Habrachot*<sup>8</sup> prayer book is a typical collection of prayers recited during family prayer. Blessings said during the liturgy of the greeting of Shabbat in the family are found in the first chapter (p. 11). The beginning is illustrated by a photograph in which there is a gold goblet encrusted with gold made in Augsburg (Germany) in 1737 and currently stored in a museum in Jerusalem. Below the goblet and between two candles is a quote from the Book of Genesis (2 : 3): “God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation.” This verse is recited as part of the blessing over the goblet of wine.

On page 13, there is a short introduction in the form of answers to questions:

- What does the lighting of Shabbat candles express?
- What is its purpose and what is the meaning of the blessing of the goblet with wine?
- What is the meaning of Shabbat meals?

With regards to family relations, the response to the third question seems very interesting. Above all, it is recalled that during Shabbat one should eat three meals: one on Friday evening and two during the day on Saturday.<sup>9</sup> The best-tasting foods should be eaten (“meat, fish, and everything that one likes”), and songs related to Shabbat should be sung, while the subject of discussion should be the Torah, especially the reading for the given week. As is known, the meal itself is something of a ritual that encourages the building up of a particular kind of community of communication during the meeting at the table.<sup>10</sup>

8 The full name of the book: *Sefer habrachot leszabatot wechagim bemiszpacha* [*The Book of Blessings for Shabbat and the Holidays Spent with One's Family*], Matan Amnujot, Tel Aviv 2006.

9 The Mishnah suggests that in antiquity two meals were typically eaten on a given day, which made Shabbat a unique day during which three meals were eaten; some rabbis even demanded that there be four meals during Shabbat – cf. *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. S. T. Katz, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, p. 562.

10 M. Bieńko, *Relacje rodzinne w genderowym i międzypokoleniowym obszarze praktyk kulinarnych*, [in:] *Role rodzinne. Między przystosowaniem a kreacją*, red. nauk. I. Przybył, A. Żurek,

It is especially emphasized that the Friday evening meal begin with a blessing over “two breads” (מישנה לחם *lechem mishne*), or two knotted challot. These challot are a memento or manifestation of the Saturday miracle that the ancient fathers experienced in the desert: “Take note! The Lord has given you the Sabbath. That is why on the sixth day he gives you food for two days” (Exodus 16 : 29).<sup>11</sup> A Jewish family that eats the Saturday meals is to experience anew the same experience of God’s care for Israel that took place forty years ago during the sojourn through the desert. The editors of the book recommend that there be plenty of fruits and sweets and that Shabbat be celebrated in an atmosphere of peace (מנוחה *menucha*) and study of the Torah.

### 3. Blessings and the Lighting of Candles

The blessings recited during the liturgy of the welcoming of Shabbat, which begins with the lighting of candles, start on page 14. The blessings for Shabbat and those for holidays are listed separately. First, the editors included the explanation: “On the evening of Shabbat,<sup>12</sup> the woman lights candles, after which she says the blessing;” next, the text of the blessing is listed: “Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctified us with the commandment of lighting Shabbat candles.” Next, there is the following commentary: “On the first day of Passover, the Shavuot, on both days of New Year, on the first day of Sukkot and on Shemini Atzeret<sup>13</sup> we say the blessing after lighting candles.” The text of the blessing is: “Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctified us with the commandment of lighting Shabbat candles.”<sup>14</sup>

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Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Społecznych Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 2016, p. 97–110.

- 11 De Vries gives a similar explanation for the symbol of the two challot: “These two loaves should point to the wisdom flowing from the double portion of manna: namely, that can also can and over the course of six days gave such abundant gifts that there was enough for the seventh day!” (S. P. De Vries Mzn., *Obrzędy i symbole Żydów*, przekł. z niderl. i oprac. A. Borowski, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2001, p. 96).
- 12 In other words, Friday evening, when Shabbat begins.
- 13 *Shemini Atzeret*, literally “the Eighth day of Assembly,” is the name of the last eighth day of staying in the tabernacle during the Feast of Tabernacles (the Hebrew name is *Sukkot*), initially a separate holiday, but added to the *Sukkot* during the time of the Second Temple (R. Goodman, *Teaching Jewish Holidays: History, Values, and Activities*, A.R.E. Publishing, Denver 1997, p. 80).
- 14 The Polish translation of these words varies depending on the source. For example: “Błogosławiony jesteś Ty, Haszem, nasz Bóg, Król świata, że dał nam żyć i utrzymał nas, i przywiódł nas

The *Sefer Habrachot* prayer book does not contain further instructions related to the lighting of candles. It does, however, emphasize that women should always perform this task. Usually this is the housewife, but sometimes other family members light candles.<sup>15</sup> When attending the welcoming of Shabbat at an Orthodox synagogue in Budapest, I noticed that all women and girls went to the front and each lit two candles, praying for a moment in silence and making characteristic gestures. The symbolism of this prayer is beautifully explained by De Vries:

The Shabbat candles are already burning. Here, the mother also says the formula for blessing. For a moment, she keeps both her hands between the light and her eyes, turning her palms towards the light. Next, she closes her eyes and says the appropriate thanksgiving in Hebrew, finally moving her hands from the light. When she opens her eyes, it is as if she the light of Shabbat had come inside her for the first time. Next, she stretches her arms out left and right and spreads the light of Shabbat throughout the building, to all its corners.

The queen comes inside; this is Shabbat.<sup>16</sup>

The editors of the *Shaarei Tefilla* prayer book speak about the woman's role in a less poetic and more practical way:

Lighting the Shabbat candles is the privilege and duty of the housewife (if she is absent or for some reason cannot light the candles, the man of the house himself lights the candles). It has become accepted that two candles are lit; each corresponds to a commandment of the Torah: "Remember the Sabbath day—keep it holy" (Exodus 20 : 8) and "Observe the Sabbath day—keep it holy, as the Lord, your God, commanded you" (Deuteronomy 5 : 12; according to other commentators, one candle is lit for the husband and the other for the wife). Because it is believed

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do tego czasu" ("Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the world, for allowing us to survive and protecting us, bringing us up to this time", *Zemiroth Pardes Lauder. Pieśni szabatowe i Błogosławieństwo po jedzeniu*, red. S. Pecaric, Stowarzyszenie Pardes, Kraków 2002, p. 74), or "Pochwalonyś Ty, Wiekuisty, Boże nasz, Królu wszechświata, który nam dał dożyć i utrzymał nas i dał nam doczekać pory tej" ("Glorified are You, Eternal, our God, King of the universe, whose allowed us to survive and protected us, allowing us to survive until now", *Hagada. Opowiadania o wyjściu Izraelitów z Egiptu na dwa pierwsze wieczory święta Pesach*, M. Zalcman, Wiedeń 1927, p. 8).

15 Chana Raizel Zaklikowski believes that the lighting of candles by girls was a commonplace habit that disappeared after World War I. In her view, Rebbecca lit candles in her father's house before becoming Isaac's wife – cf. [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/1221742/jewish/Do-Young-Girls-Light-Shabbat-and-Holiday-Candles.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1221742/jewish/Do-Young-Girls-Light-Shabbat-and-Holiday-Candles.htm) (17.12.2017).

16 S. P. De Vries Mzn., *Obrzędy i symbole Żydów*, op. cit., p. 94.

that Shabbat begins at the moment when the candles are lit [...] the following order of lighting has been established: the woman lights the candles; next, she covers her eyes with her hands (many of them first move their hands towards the candles); and, finally, she says the blessing, opens her eyes, and looks at the candles [...]. After lighting the candles and saying a short prayer in their native language, many women direct personal requests to God.<sup>17</sup>

In general, it is believed that a woman encompassed her family, community, city, country, and the entire world with her prayer. This is reflected in the text of the additional prayer located in the prayer book under analysis, the *Sefer Habrachot*, in two versions (according to the Western *Ashkenazi* tradition and the Eastern *Sephardic* one):

May it be your will, Lord, my God and the God of my fathers, that you may show me mercy (to my husband, my sons and my daughters, my father, and my mother) and all those close to me. Grant us and all of Israel a good and long life; remember us for good blessings; grant us redemption, salvation, and mercy; grant us great mercy; and grant our homes peace so that Your glory may live amongst us. Make me worthy of bringing up my children and grandchildren to be wise and judicious people of the truth who love the Lord and fear Him; holy children devoted to God and carrying the light of the Torah, doing good, and serving the Creator in all possible ways. Please listen to my requests at this time because of our ancestral mothers Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Lea, and never let the light of our life be extinguished. Brighten your face [before us], and we shall be saved. Amen

It is believed that, unlike other formulas, most of which were arranged by rabbis, this prayer has been arranged by women.<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting the family bonds mentioned here, the intercession of the praying women, and the reference to the inter-generational bonds with Israel's ancestral mothers.

Next, on page 15 of the *Sefer Habrachot*, under the heading *Blessing Children*, three blessings usually said before children have been placed: "May the Lord do to you what he did to Ephraim and Manasseh" (boys); "May the Lord do to you what he did to Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Lea" (girl); and then Aaron's blessing follows (Numbers 6 : 24–26):

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17 *Sidur szaarej tfla (nusach aszkenaz)*, ed. P. Polonski, Machanaim, Jeruzalem 5767 (2008), footnote on p. 459.

18 Zob. np. L. Palatnik, *Candle Lighting: How To*, <http://www.aish.com/sh/ht/fn/48965051.html> (17.12.2017).

The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you!  
The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!

The blessing of children is an excellent opportunity to feel mutual closeness, kindness, and love. As Fox says:

The blessing is performed differently in every family. In some traditional homes, only the father blesses the children. In other families, both parents give blessings—either together and in unison, or first one parent, followed by the other. In some homes the mother blesses the girls and the father blesses the boys.

Usually, the person giving the blessing places both hands on the child's head. Some parents bless each child, starting with the eldest and going down to the youngest. Others first bless all the girls and later bless all the boys.

After blessing their children, some parents whisper something into their child's ear, such as praising him or her for something he or she had done in the previous week or simply giving encouragement or expressing love. In almost every family, the blessing is followed by kisses and embraces.<sup>19</sup>

The blessing of boys refers to the story of Joseph, who brought his sons Ephraim and Manasseh to his father, Jacob (Israel), asking him to bless them. According to the Biblical text, Jacob “blessed them that day and said, ‘By you shall the people of Israel pronounce blessings, saying, ‘God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh’” (Genesis 48 : 20). In the context of tenderness and touch (the laying of hands), the child hears from his or her parents words that were said by their ancestor, from whom the entire nation of Israel takes its names, 3,500 years ago. Without a doubt, in this way the feelings of community and identity are strengthened.

#### 4. Greeting the Angels and Praise for the Housewife

Next, the song *Shalom Aleichem*, which is something like the greeting of the angels that are the servants of the Almighty, is found on page 16 in the *Sefer Habrachot*. Many authors believe that this song was composed in the sixteenth

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19 T. Fox, *Blessing the Children*, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/blessing-the-children/> (17.12.2017).



century among Cabbalists<sup>20</sup> in the city of Safed (Tsfat) under the influence of the following Talmudic teaching:

It is taught that the rabbi Jose, son of Judah, said: “Two servant angels accompany the person on Friday evening [on the way] from the synagogue to the house; one is good, and one is evil. When one walks into one’s house and sees a burning lamp, set table, and preparations for one’s seat, the good angel calls: May it be like this on the next Shabbat! The evil angel is forced to reply: Amen. However, in the opposite case [when the house is not prepared], the evil angel calls: May it be like this on the next Shabbat! The good angel is forced to reply: Amen.”<sup>21</sup>

At the end of the song, verses from Sacred Scripture are recalled: “For He commands His angels with regard to you to guard you wherever you go” (Psalm 91 : 11) and “The Lord will guard your coming and going both now and forever” (Psalm 121 : 8).

The text itself contains no references to family relationships. However, the family context that the Talmud points to is very important. The housewife was traditionally responsible for properly preparing the meal and the house’s decor, as well as for keeping the most important elements related to following the commandments. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* references the words of Rabbi Jacob ben Asher (who lived approximately between 1269 and 1343) from the work *Orach Chaim*<sup>22</sup> (חיים אורח *Lifestyle*): “Before dusk, the head of the household asks [his wife]: have you kept the tithe? Did you do the *eruv* and divide the *challah*? After hearing a positive response, he says: ‘In that case, light the [Shabbat] candles.’”<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, the woman’s task was to prepare everything so that the “visit of the angels” that the *Shalom Aleichem* prayer refers to does not do an about-face and harm the family.

Thus the logical consequence of the greeting of the angels is recognition and praise for the housewife, who gave the family the opportunity to fulfill the commandments related to the celebration of Shabbat. The husband recites or sings this praise in the form of the text of Proverbs 31 : 10–31. Eisenberg emphasizes that this song recognizes in the woman such qualities as the

20 Cf. np. A. Rosenberg, *Jewish Liturgy as a Spiritual System. A Prayer-by-Prayer Explanation of the nature and meaning of Jewish worship*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Maryland 2004, p. 152.

21 Talmud Babiloński, traktat *Szabat*, 119b.

22 This text is available in Hebrew online at: [https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan\\_Arukh,OrachChayim?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh,OrachChayim?lang=bi) (17.12.2017).

23 *Jewish Encyclopedia*, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12962-sabbath> (17.12.2017).

feeling of dignity, the gaining of recognition in the community, practicality, hard work, wisdom, and good in statements as well as certainty and optimism in dealing with life problems. Husbands appreciate such wives, while their sons treat them with respect.<sup>24</sup>

Shurpin notes that most likely the custom of singing this hymn on the evening of Shabbat originates in the Cabbalist school in Safed, and one of the earliest prayer books containing Proverbs 31 : 10–31 is Rabbi Ha-Levi Horowitz's (1565–1630) *Sidur*.<sup>25</sup> He also writes that one of the rabbinical traditions ascribes this hymn to the patriarch Abraham, who supposedly had written it as praise for his wife Sarah. Others, meanwhile, consider King Solomon, who wrote it to praise his mother, Queen Bathsheba, to be the author. He also references a midrash that ascribes twenty-two verses, Proverbs 31 : 10–31, to nineteen great women of Israel. Without a doubt, these interpretations deepen the impact of the recited hymn about the brave woman on the strengthening of family relationships irrespective of other opinions, considering the symbol of the “brave woman” to be the crown of the Torah, the queen Saturday, the beloved Saturday, and even the human soul strengthened by God's Spirit.

## 5. The *Kiddush* and the Meal

The next pages in the *Sefer Habrachot* are titled שבת ליל קידוש *The Friday Evening Kiddush* (literally, “Kiddush of the Shabbat night”). The concept of *kiddush* is usually translated as “sanctification;” dictionaries usually explain it as a name referring to exactly the following ritual: “A prayer said by the head of the household over a glass of wine on the evening inaugurating Shabbat or another holiday, repeated the following morning.”<sup>26</sup> According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, rabbis created the ceremony of this sanctification consisting of reciting this prayer with a goblet of wine in hand on the basis of verse Exodus 20 : 8.<sup>27</sup> According to the *Shabbat* treatise 86a, sanctification

24 R. L. Eisenberg, *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia 2004, p. 129.

25 Y. Shurpin, *Why Sing Eishet Chayil on Friday Night?*, [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3390021/jewish/Why-Sing-Eishet-Chayil-on-Friday-Night.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3390021/jewish/Why-Sing-Eishet-Chayil-on-Friday-Night.htm) (17.12.2017).

26 A. Cała, H. Węgrzynek, G. Zalewska, *Historia i kultura Żydów polskich. Encyklopedia żydowska*, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa 2000, p. 155.

27 <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12962-sabbath> (17.12.2017).

consists of the fact that the sanctity of Shabbat is discussed out loud. It has been traditionally believed that the liturgy of sanctification was formulated by the so-called Great Congregation right after the return from the Babylonian exile (the *Berakhot* treatise, 33a), which is confirmed by the fact that already in the time of Hillel and Shammai (first century before Christ) there were lively discussions among rabbis on this topic.<sup>28</sup>

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* informs us that the *kiddush* consists of two blessings: that of the wine and of Saturday. First, a fragment of Genesis 2 : 1–3 is recited in accordance with the rabbis' suggestion concerning the Talmud that everyone who recites these verses becomes something like God's partner in the work of creation (*Shabbat* 119b).

The headline titled *The Friday Evening Kiddush* in the *Sefer Habrachot* book contains an editor's direction to fill the cup with wine and recite standing with the cup in one's right hand. Before the fragment of Genesis 2 : 1–3 are words whispered in the *Ashkenazi* tradition ending verse 1 : 31: "Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day." Next follows:

"Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. On the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing; he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation" (Genesis 2 : 1–3).

Next, the head of the family says: "With permission."<sup>29</sup> The men present respond: "To health!" (*Sephardim*) | "With your permission, masters, teachers, and lords!" (*Ashkenazim*), after which the blessing of the wine takes place: "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who created the fruit of the vine."

The subsequent part of the text consists of the proper sanctification of Shabbat in accordance with the Talmudic understanding of the commandment from Exodus 20 : 8:

"Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the world, who has created us with Your commandments, made us similar to You, and made Shabbat holy in love and grace and gave it to us [as

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9307-kiddush> (17.12.2017).

<sup>29</sup> The Hebrew word סָבַר *savre* can mean "with your permission" or "attention" – cf. H. H. Donin, *To pray as a Jew. A guide to the prayer book and the synagogue service*, Basic Books, New York 1991, p. 324.

a legacy] as a reminder of Creation. **This is the day** that is most important among the Holy Congregations, a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt. **Because You have chosen us and sanctified us among all the nations.** You gave us Your Shabbat, holy in love and in grace [as a legacy]. Blessed are You, Hashem, who sanctifies Shabbat.”<sup>30</sup>

The bold fragments in the *Sefer Habrachot* book are in red font and marked as belonging to the Ashkenazi tradition.

At this point, it is worth noting that the English word “reminder” does not express the meaning of the Hebrew זִכָּרוֹן *zikaron*, which appears twice in this blessing, fully.

The way in which Jews celebrate Shabbat shows their understanding of the concept of *zikaron* as actualization. On this day, a Jew renounces dominion over the material world and once again becomes aware of the fact that he is not a creator, but an “owner, manager, and manufacturer.” In the Jewish mentality, God is the lord of the universe who gave people dominion over the earth. Man should change the face of the earth according to his own needs and capabilities, as it is written: “The heavens belong to the Lord, but He has given the earth to the children of Adam” (Psalm 115 : 16). Meanwhile, Shabbat is the day when man does not have dominion over things, instead turning that dominion over to God. By refusing to do such things as blowing out candles or removing a candelabrum from the table, a Jew renounces all dominion over creation because the only lord of everything is God.<sup>31</sup>

This means that when a Jewish family celebrates Shabbat, they do not so much recall some events as they make them real through specific acts. Rabbi S. R. Girsz described this idea as follows:

Man's dominion over the earth is manifest in the fact that man transforms the surrounding world to suit his needs. Man can exercise this dominion over the course of six days, but on the seventh day he has dominion over nothing. In this way, it is announced that man is not the true ruler of the world, as is written in the Psalm: “The earth is the Lord's and all it holds, the world and those who dwell in it” (Psalm 24 : 1). Thus each Shabbat we have the responsibility to “return” to Him dominion over the earth so that we remember that the earth is lent to use for [temporary] use.<sup>32</sup>

30 Cf. *Zemiroth Pardes Lauder. Pieśni szabatowe i Błogostawieństwo po jedzeniu*, op. cit., p. 41–42.

31 Mor Severius Moses, M. Rucki, M. Abdalla, *Eucharystyczna obecność Chrystusa w rozumieniu liturgicznym Kościoła Antiocheńskiego*, „Liturgia Sacra” 22 (2016) no. 1, p. 43–67.

32 Qtd. in: *Sidur szaarej tfil*, comment on p. 462.

In other words, Jews do not work on the Sabbath day because they are not allowed to, but instead because on that day the entire dominion over material things in reality returns to God. Rest on Shabbat becomes a reality in which the family takes part.

After these words of sanctification, the washing of hands takes place while reciting the appropriate formula: “Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctified us with the commandment<sup>33</sup> of washing our hands.”

The washing of hands is not tied to hygiene, but instead to ritual purity. The washing takes place through pouring water from a vessel with two handles (so that the washed hand does not make contact with the part that had previously been touched by the unwashed hand). The fist must not be clenched (see: Mark 7 : 3). The *Jewish Encyclopedia* explains that:

“The ritual washing of the hands is not explicitly prescribed by the Bible, but is inferred by the rabbis (*Hul.* 106a) from the passage, Lev. xv. 11, in which it is stated that if a person afflicted with an unclean issue have not washed (or bathed) his hands his touch contaminates. The passage, Ps. xxvi. 6, ‘I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord,’ also warrants the inference that Ablution of the hands is requisite before performing any holy act. This particular form of Ablution is the one which has survived most completely and is most practiced by Jews. Before any meal of which bread forms a part, the hands must be solemnly washed and the appropriate benediction recited. Before prayer, too, the hands must be washed; also after any unclean bodily function or after contact with an unclean object.<sup>34</sup>

This does have an impact on family relations. The entire family takes part in the act of sanctification before beginning the meal. This is the factor that unites the family that “becomes immersed” in the sacred.

After the washing of hands, the following blessing is said over the bread: “Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who brings forth bread from the earth.” There are no guidelines in the *Sefer Habrakhot* as to how this should be performed. It is described by De Vries:

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33 Although the custom of washing hands was the subject of controversy in Jesus’ time (see, for example, Mark 7 : 2–5), it is believed that the wise men got it from the Torah and in the name of the Torah established the custom on the basis of their authority, as was the case with the lighting of the candles.

34 <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/338-ablution> (17.12.2017).

The cover is taken off the *challot*; both of the *challot* are raised up to the accompaniment of prayer praising the Creator “who brings forth bread from the earth.” One bread is cut or broken. The father takes a piece, dips it in salt and shares it with all sitting around him. Then the supper can begin.<sup>35</sup>

It is easy to note that that is the time when a special moment that emphasizes family relations takes place here and in a certain sense also the role of the father of the family as the person who gets bread for everyone with the sweat of his brow (see: 3 Genesis 2 : 17, Matthew 19 : 8).

The *Sefer Habrachot* book contains an editor’s instruction that everyone must receive a piece of bread smaller than an olive. This is the smallest possible quantity of food that rabbis have considered can be eaten. Smaller quantities do not qualify for this concept. The words „Shabbat meal” are placed under this comment. As has already been mentioned, this meal is the most ceremonious and joyous family meeting; the tastiest dishes are served and everyday problems are not discussed.

The great impact of a shared meal on strengthening the family has, naturally, been widely noted. According to surveys published online, more than 80 percent of Poles believe that a common meal forges interpersonal bonds.<sup>36</sup> I will quote Więczkowska’s article:

When we sit together at the table without television or mobile phones, we have the opportunity to build a better and more permanent relationship with our children. A shared meal and accompanying conversation become the center of domestic culture. This is a place for pleasant encounters that impart on the household members many positive emotions, making the family table a place for sharing and forging bonds. This is especially important from the perspective, ever so frequent today, of building family culture around the television. [...] A family gathered at the table is a vibrant, kind family that is attentive to the needs of others.<sup>37</sup>

All these factors are all the stronger in the case of the Shabbat meal, especially since the family becomes aware of the *sacrum* of time and space.

35 S. P. De Vries Mzn., *Obrzędy i symbole Żydów*, op. cit., p. 97.

36 For example, the website <https://www.sosrodzice.pl/dlaczego-wspolne-posilki-sa-takie-wazne/> states it is 82 percent, while <http://www.cocacola.com.pl/dla-mediow/wspolny-posilek-tworzy-rodzinne-wiezi-raport-coca-cola-polacy-przy-stole> (December 21, 2017) gives a slightly higher figure (86 percent).

37 M. Więczkowska, *Co wciąga twoje dziecko?*, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2012, p. 35.

Without a doubt, a common meal celebrated cyclically, once a week, as a ritual meeting with the purpose of resting together and spending time pleasantly after a week of work strongly solidifies all the positive aspects of a common meal mentioned by Więczkowska.

## 6. Shabbat Songs

More than one hundred years ago, Dickinson wrote that music is the most social art form, because it creates the best opportunity for cooperation.<sup>38</sup> Calling every religious ritual in Judaism a “musical event,” Friedmann references the opinion of many scholars who have noted that music unites people, emphasizes the meaning of the given moment, and creates a feeling of community that is repeated on similar occasions (a specific time and place) and gives rise to common memories, helping to define the identity and place of the community. Religious songs have one more advantage: the harmony of words and melodies creates and strengthens the truths of the faith and of model behavior.<sup>39</sup>

Page 20 contains a small headline: *Shabbat Songs*, and below are the texts of two traditional songs: *D’ror Yikra* and *Yedid Nefesh*. A common song becomes an intrinsic element of the meal on Friday evening, although musical instruments are not used. This probably results from the fact that musical instruments were played in the Temple of Jerusalem and since the time of its destruction up to the moment of its rebuilding in the Messianic times religious Jews abstain from playing musical instruments on Shabbat.<sup>40</sup> The *Jewish Encyclopedia* provides a different explanation; namely, that musical instruments are not used on Shabbat because of fear that tuning them can provoke some sort of related work.<sup>41</sup> The introduction of organs to Saturday services by Reform Jewish congregations led to stormy discussions in Jewish circles; the vast majority decided to stick to just song. Similarly, musical instruments

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38 Cf. J. L. Friedmann, *Social Functions of Synagogue Song. A Durkheimian Approach*, Rowman & Littlefield, Maryland–Plymouth 2012, p. 1.

39 *Ibidem*, p. 3–4.

40 Y. M. Miller, *Angels at the Table: A Practical Guide to Celebrating Shabbat*, Continuum, London–New York 2011, p. 26.

41 <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11241-music-synagogal> (17.12.2017).

are not used during the Saturday liturgy in families when traditional Hebrew and Aramaic songs are sung.

A certain number of Hebrew songs intended for Friday evening is found in prayer books have been used to celebrate services for a long time. They contain much true poetry, but there are examples of poems of inferior quality. Nearly every one of these texts has a corresponding melody that had been ascribed to it over the centuries; in fact, there are usually several for each text. Singing takes place during the meal or immediately after it ends. Not all songs are sung everywhere, nor are the same ones sung at each Shabbat everywhere. In each case, however, the meal ends with Psalm 126, which is an ordinary festive Psalm intended for Shabbat and the holy days, as well as with the saying of the prayer of thanksgiving.<sup>42</sup>

Hoffman notes that singing Shabbat songs probably originates in the rather commonplace custom of singing after large meals accompanied by alcohol. He notes an important distinction with regards to Shabbat:

On the one hand, the *z'mirot* as Shabbat table songs are the most natural thing in the world: what could be more obvious than the attraction of stretching out a festive meal with song? On the other hand, singing Shabbat *zmirot* is its own unique experience, going back many centuries, but not all the way to whenever it was that Jews first started meeting around the table for holiday celebrations. [...] Saying that Jews have always met God in prayer tells us nothing about what we now call synagogue services, and recognizing the relatively universal human custom of singing together after sharing a heavy holiday meal, especially with enough wine to last beyond dessert, says nothing about the unique home liturgical practice of including after-dinner songs at the Shabbat table.<sup>43</sup>

Friedmann notes that music arouses two dispositions directly tied to the celebration of Shabbat: rest and peace. He writes about this as follows:

The Talmud lists music among the human indulgences capable of restoring serenity of mind (BT *Berakhot* 57b). This quality of music appears in the Biblical account of Saul and David, and lies

42 S. P. De Vries Mzn., *Obrzędy i symbole Żydów*, op. cit., p. 97.

43 L. A. Hoffman, *Shabbat Z'mirot*, [in:] *My People's Prayer Book. Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries*, vol. 7: *Shabbat at home*, ed. L. A. Hoffman, Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock 2004, p. 23–29.



at the root of the modern field of music therapy. In Jewish practice, the soothing effect of music is especially important on Shabbat, a day set aside for rest and peace.<sup>44</sup>

In another study, this same author notes the seven main functions of singing prayers in the religious experience of Judaism, emphasizing three clearly tied to the social sphere: the educational (introducing and strengthening religious teaching), communal (creating a feeling of community thanks to music), and universal functions.<sup>45</sup> He also did an interesting analysis of specific songs that are sung in Reform synagogues on Friday evenings.<sup>46</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

An analysis of the family liturgy on Shabbat in light of the *Sefer Habrachot* allows us to flesh out several factors that are important for directly ties in Jewish families directly resulting from the said blessings and from the context not described in the analyzed book.

Among the words that are said, the following expressions are deserving of attention:

- “Our God,” which emphasizes the communal belonging of the family celebrating Shabbat to God (first person plural) and a close relationship with Him;
- “Blessed are you,” a special way of paying homage to God and expressing thanks to Him for specific graces;
- “Who sanctified us with the commandment,” a communal experience consisting of sanctifying the family through God’s commandments;
- “You commanded us,” God’s commandment given to the Jewish community represented here by the family is not only difficult and cumbersome, but it also brings joy and a sense of fulfillment;
- “You gave us life” (the blessing said on the holy days), an expression of the full dependence of the family’s life on God;
- “May it be Your will, oh Lord,” a typical phrase in a prayer that instructs humility in turning to God, as the one who prays does not desire

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44 J. L. Friedmann, *Synagogue Song. An Introduction to Concepts, Theories and Customs*, McFarland, Jefferson 2012, p. 109.

45 J. L. Friedmann, *Social Functions of Synagogue Song. A Durkheimian Approach*, op. cit., p. 142.

46 Ibidem, p. 139–142.

anything that would not be in accordance with God's will, instead gently suggesting his or her desire;

- A prayer for one's loved ones contains numerous phrases and lines that build supernatural (spiritual) family ties in relation to God and the covenant between Him and the praying woman's ancestors;
- The blessing of the children that builds a bond between parents and children, strengthens the feeling of identity and connection to the generation of ancestors down to the times of Jacob-Israel and the ancestral mother Sarah, making a distant Biblical message a personal experience;
- „Aaron's blessing” said by the father, suggesting his role as the priest in the family, which strengthens the feeling of belonging and connection to the entire nation and the Covenant;
- “Peace be with ye, ye ministering angels,” which teaches to take into consideration the spiritual realm in one's everyday behavior and the angels' full dependence on God;
- “For He commands His angels with regard to you,” verses from Psalms 91, 11, and 121 : 8 build a feeling of safety based on Biblical promises and the experience of God's concern that protects the Jewish people, and at the same time the individual family members (second person singular);
- The “brave woman,” Biblical verses that acknowledge the hard work of the woman at home, her responsibility to maintain the sanctity of the home space and of meals, her noteworthy attitude of fear of God and respectable resourcefulness, which leads to the husband's trust and the children's respect, this is a song that greatly emphasizes the role of the God-fearing woman in family life and encouraging respectful treatment of mothers;
- The *Kiddush*, or the sanctification of Shabbat in a special way, which emphasizes the sanctity of the time and place where the family gathers;
- Verses from the Book of Genesis that recall that the world has been created by God and people make use of it only temporarily, and the sanctity of Shabbat is the result of the specific activity of God and His blessings;
- The blessing of the wine once again emphasizes the communal experience of God (“our God”) as well as the dependency of people's lives on

God's activity ("you created the fruit"); when blessed in this way, the wine becomes a source of joy and usually does not lead to the abuse of alcohol;

- "Blessed are you Lord, our God," as above;
- "You have loved us": the experience of God's love is the result of His autonomous decision, which the family experiences not because of its merits or unique talents, but because of God's love;
- "You made Shabbat holy in love and grace": the family is the carrier of something valuable received from God's gift of love, and that something is Shabbat;
- "Reminder of creation": a reminder that the world has been created by God as well as the embodiment of the act of rest after a week of work;
- "That is most important among the Holy Congregations": the family meeting on Shabbat is the most important of all holy days and forms of celebration commanded by God;
- "Reminder of the Exodus from Egypt": the embodiment of freedom and the experience of any given family's ancestors;
- "You have chosen us:" the family as the result of God's autonomous decision becomes part of the community of the chosen;
- "You have sanctified us:" the family can experience sanctification through the celebration of Shabbat thanks to God's autonomous decision;
- "You gave us Shabbat, holy in love": the family celebrates Shabbat not because it has been commanded, but because it is a gift of love;
- "Who sanctifies Shabbat": in reality, God sanctifies Shabbat, but the family that participates in this sanctification celebrates it and proclaims its sanctity;
- "The ablution of hands," proceeding to holy activities and directly moving to the sacred sphere;
- "Who brings forth bread from the earth" thanksgiving for the gift of bread, the basic food that sustains life.

In conclusion, the weekly celebration of Shabbat strengthens Jewish family ties, builds an atmosphere of mutual respect and love, creates a feeling of identity and safety with respect to real events from the life of many generations of ancestors in relation to the specific, clear, and powerful activity of God. The centuries-old experience of the presence of God becomes a family's experience of "here and now."

## Abstract

### The Liturgy of Welcoming Shabbat and Family Relationships

This article contains an analysis of liturgical texts typically used for the welcoming of Shabbat with regards to their impact on relationships in the family. It deals with specific acts and words in the order in which they appeared in a typical prayer book: the lighting of candles and the appropriate blessings; the welcoming of the angels; the *Kiddush*; the meal and the singing of songs. All these elements contain factors that are conducive to the strengthening of family ties. Furthermore, celebrating the liturgy emphasizes the communal experience of God throughout the generations and at a given time as well as the dependence of the lives of people on God's work.

**Keywords:** Judaism; Shabbat; family; identity

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