

## A GUIDE TO THE SHABBAT EVENING SERVICE

Shabbat Shalom! Welcome to the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue community! We're so glad to have you here.

Tonight, we joyfully gather in the main sanctuary to welcome Shabbat. After our prayer service, we'll convene downstairs in the Women's Organization Lounge to connect and meet new friends while enjoying refreshments.

Our Friday night service is divided into three seamless sections: Kabbalat Shabbat (Welcoming the Sabbath), D'var Torah (Words of Torah) and Ma'ariv (Evening Service). After the service we say blessings over wine and bread.

### KABBALAT SHABBAT (WELCOMING THE SABBATH)

Here at Stephen Wise, Kabbalat Shabbat is an uplifting musical journey from start to finish. The evening service is preceded by a series of beautiful Psalms and hymns from pages 12 to 23 in our prayer book. These psalms praise God and lift us up as we focus our attention on gratitude.

The climax of Kabbalat Shabbat is the singing of *L'chah Dodi* ("To You, My Bride") on pages 20 and 21. Traditionally, the Kabbalists understood Kabbalat Shabbat as a time when people and God symbolically reconnect and recommit their love for one another — just like a married couple. You'll notice that the music of *L'chah Dodi* starts softly and slowly and intensifies until the last verse, at which we rise and face the door. It's at this moment that we symbolically usher in what we refer to as the Sabbath Bride, which is one of the names the Kabbalists gave us for an aspect of God that presents itself on Shabbat.

### D'VAR TORAH (WORDS OF TORAH)

A short teaching inspired by traditional text, given by one of our rabbis.

### MA'ARIV (EVENING SERVICE)

During the evening service for Shabbat we point our attention towards joy, gratitude and renewal. We start Ma'ariv with the *Bar'chu* (page 146), a blessing for which we rise, indicating that we are ready to pray, as the main body of the service begins. We bow as the traditional way to approach God.

Soon after the *Bar'chu*, we recite blessings connected to the *Sh'ma* (page 148). The *Sh'ma* proclaims Judaism's central belief that God is one. We cover our eyes to emphasize the sound of the whole community as we share in the declaration of God's unity.

The blessings before and after the *Sh'ma* present themes of creation, revelation and redemption (see the bottom of page 146).

The core of every Jewish worship service is called the *T'filah* or "Prayer" (pages 155 through 169); it embodies our deepest concerns and aspirations. Another name for this prayer is the *Amidah*, meaning "standing," since we stand for its duration. During weekdays, it consists of three sections: praise; a series of petitions for our land and our people; and thanksgiving.

Our tradition teaches that Shabbat is a perfect day — a taste of the world to come, in which all our wants and needs are met. For this reason, the Shabbat service eliminates the petitionary prayers. Instead, the middle section of the *T'filah* includes three blessings that celebrate Shabbat. The *T'filah* concludes with a silent personal prayer.

Ma'ariv concludes with *Mi Shebeirach*, a prayer for healing, during which we share names of people for whom we pray for healing of body or spirit. We continue with the *Aleinu L'shabei-ach* (page 282), during which we renew our commitment to our ancient covenant with God.

We conclude Kabbalat Shabbat with the *Kaddish Yatom*, "Mourner's *Kaddish*," for which we rise as a sign of respect as we remember those loved ones who have died.

#### **KIDDUSH**

Immediately following the service, we join together in the lobby for *kiddush*, or sanctification of Shabbat. We sanctify Shabbat by reciting this blessing over wine or grape juice. Fill your cups and raise them up!

#### **MOTZI**

The *Motzi* is our blessing over bread expressing gratitude for God's providence. Tonight, we bless the challah with these words. The *Motzi* signifies our official beginning of the meal. We offer thanks for the food on our tables and the sustenance it provides in our lives.

Shabbat Shalom!