

Havdalah Service for Labor Day

by Rabbi Robert J. Marx



Responsive Reading: (Adapted from Psalm 141)

Lord I call unto you; answer my call, O God

Let my prayer be as a sweet offering unto you; the deeds of my hands as a willing offering.

O Lord, guard my mouth that it not speak evil; my lips that they bless and not hurt.

Turn my heart away from evil; the exploiting of friends and those who work.

Keep me far from those who would exploit the weak; take advantage of the powerless.

From their table may I not eat; from their abuses may I not prosper.

Keep me far from those who gain from their iniquity, spare me from the snare which they would spread before me.

For you are my refuge and my hope, my joy and my salvation.

(The leader lights the candle)

Shabbat begins with the lighting of candles and it ends with the lighting of candles.

How different they are. Two separate candles inaugurate Shabbat. One intertwined candle marks its close. These candles speak of those who work. Justice for the worker calls us to listen to the message of the candles.

The Shabbat candles tell us that it is time to rest, that it is time to turn from our daily routine, and set a limit to our labors. The Havdalah candle lights our way back to the tasks that lie before us. Both candles are to be blessed. It is a mistake to take either work or rest for granted. Both are to be sanctified by light. Both are to be blessed.

O God, Creator of us all, bless us with the memory of Shabbat rest. May we remember how precious is the calming presence of Thy spirit. Despite our worries and problems, the peace of Shabbat has been a calming presence in our trou-

bled lives. And for those who labor, that calming presence offers the blessed promise that the eternal Shabbat for which we pray will tolerate no exploitation of works, no seizing of pensions, no revoking of health care benefits or time to rest. For who can really look back upon a Shabbat where these injustices were allowed to remain unquestioned, allowed to stand unchallenged?

(The cup of wine is raised)

This wine is the symbol of joy and of life. But the grapes which produced this wine were not always the harbingers of either joy or of life. How many of those who produced this wine received too little of wages and too much of pesticides. Just as we look to grapes that are clean and called kosher, so we would demand, no we would expect that the working conditions, the health conditions, the salary conditions, the life conditions of those who produced these grapes be clean and kosher.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַיַּיִן.

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

(The spice box is raised)

This moment brings its sweet scent into our fading day. The spices of Havdalah remind us of life itself and its many promises. But can we inhale the sweet spices of Havdalah without remembering those whose nostrils are clogged with scents of a more threatening origin, the choking odor of dangerous industrial waste, the fumes of noxious fertilizers sprayed upon those who harvest our grapes or glean our fruit trees? O Holy One, let there be sweetness for all Thy children. Keep far from them both the odors of life threatening pollutants and the odorous practices of those who would rob them of the dignity of their labor.

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, בורא מיני בשרים.

Blessed Is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of all the spices.
(The spice box is circulated)

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, בורא מאורי האש.

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the light of fire.
(The candle is raised)

And now as we prepare to extinguish this intertwined candle, we pause for a moment to think of those whose lives are intertwined with our own, whose labor makes our life more meaningful. (Pause for a moment to mention those whose work we all too often take for granted, and those who may be exploited through our indifference. Workers in sweatshops, men and women in the poultry industry, those overseas who are obliged to work long hours at minimal pay, day laborers, etc.)

May we never take these children of God for granted. Have we done all we can to make their future a promise of hope and joy rather than of oppression and desperation?

With clean hands, with pure hearts, may we come before our Creator as this new week begins. We will not rest, we cannot rest until there is justice; justice for those who are near; justice for those who are far away; justice in our homes, and in our factories and in our fields. Justice! Justice! Thou shalt pursue.

(The candle is extinguished)

**ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, המבדיל בין קדש
לחול, בין אור לחשך, בין יום השביעי לששת ימי המעשה.
ברוך אתה, יי, המבדיל בין קדש לחול.**

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who separates sacred from profane, light from darkness, the seventh day of rest from the six days of labor.
Blessed is the Lord, who separates the sacred from the profane.
(The candle is extinguished)

El-li-ya-hu ha-na-vi, El-li-ya-hu

ha-tish-bi; El-li-ya-hu, El-li-ya-hu,

El-li-ya-hu ha-gil-a-di.

Bim-hei-ra ve-ya-mei-nu, ya-vo

el-lei-nu; im ma-shi-ach ben

Da-vid, im ma-shi-ach ben

David. El-li-ya-hu....

**אלהו הנביא, אלהו
החשבי; אלהו, אלהו,
אלהו הגלעדי.
במרה בימינו, יבא
אלינו; עם משיח בן
דוד, עם משיח בן
דוד. אלהו . . .**

A good week. A week of peace. May gladness reign and light increase....

Sha-vu-a tov....

שבוע טוב . . .

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