

DID JESUS CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS?

A GUIDE FOR CHRISTIANS TO JEWISH HOLIDAYS



CHRISTIE L. JENKINS
ALICE HUGH BROWN

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DEDICATION

Christie L. Jenkins dedicates this book in loving memory of her aunt Josephine M. Malone, and a good friend, Phoebe B. Starr.

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INTRODUCTION

This is, quite simply, a book for Christians about Jewish holidays/festivals and observances. It was the Jewish festivals that Jesus, his family, and first followers celebrated. Why is this important? Christianity is grafted onto the tree of Judaism —“the root that supports you.” (Rom 11:18d)

Diversity existed within Judaism during Jesus’ lifetime and there is diversity today. The Christianity developed by Jesus’ followers was and is also diverse. Jesus’ disciples are often referred to as Jewish Christians; they saw themselves as Jews. In the first century, early members of the Jewish sect, the Jesus Movement, did not question the continued observance of Jewish practices. This became a concern only when Gentiles wanted to join the movement. Was it necessary to first become a Jew and adhere to the Law in order to belong?

More conservative members of the Jesus Movement, the circumcision party, thought that Gentile Christians did indeed need to become Jews and adhere to the observance of Torah (Act 11:2-3; 15:1-5, 21:20, Gal 2:12). Paul, however, argued that Gentile Christians did not need to observe Jewish custom in order to be Christian and opposed both Jewish and Gentile Christians who thought otherwise (Act 15, Gal). Peter was more ambivalent on this issue. As more Gentiles entered the church, Paul’s views came to predominate. However, during the first three centuries of the church’s existence, various Christian groups continued to observe Jewish law and festivals in some manner.

There were various *Jewish* Christian groups: the Ebionites who only used the book of Matthew; the Jacobites who were associated with James, and accepted Jesus as a prophet; and the Nazarenes who shared more mainline Christian beliefs of the time. There were also *Gentile* Christians, the Judaizers, in Asia Minor, Rome, Syria, and Egypt who observed some aspects of Jewish law and custom.

During these first centuries, the majority of Christians who no longer observed Jewish customs or the Biblical holidays were nevertheless celebrating modified and adapted Jewish festivals of Shabbat, Passover, and Shavuot. Christians celebrated Shabbat on the first rather than the seventh day and commemorated Christ’s resurrection rather than God as Creator. Easter, the first and still most important Christian holiday to develop was associated with Passover. Until well into the second century in some regions, Easter was celebrated on 15 Nisan, Passover, or on the Sunday during Passover. During the third century, Easter came to be celebrated for fifty days with the addition of Pentecost (which was associated with Shavuot in Acts).

The Nazarenes managed to persist into the fourth century, which also witnessed a resurgence of Gentile Judaizers. The practice of Christians (including some clergy) celebrating the Jewish holidays with their Jewish neighbors seems to have been fairly widespread in the East during the fourth century. Many Christians attended the

synagogues on Shabbat. They participated in such festivals as Passover, Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot.

Alarmed that some Christians still continued to celebrate the Jewish holidays, a number of clerics during the fourth century condemned these practices and worked to eliminate them. Church synods (Elivra 306, Nicea 325, Antioch 341, Laodicea 365) prohibited the Christian observance of Jewish holidays. Although in areas such as Syria, Judaizers would persist into the fifth-sixth century, eventually these Eastern Christians would be dissuaded from such practice.

From what we now know, some Judaizers at the beginning of the first Christian millennium felt they were imitating Christ by celebrating Jewish custom. Others thought that the Hebrew Scriptures, which the church had adopted, were binding on Christians. Perhaps most importantly these Christian Judaizers did not share the dominant church viewpoint at that time that the old Jewish covenant had been abrogated and made invalid by the new Christian covenant. Rather they thought Christians and Jews could share the same covenant (Barnabas 4:6-7); or that there were two equal covenants — one for Jews, the other for Christians (Rom 11; Pseudo Clement Hom 8:6-7; Pseudo Clement Rec 4:5; Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs XII).

As the church arrives now at the dawn of its third millennium, echoes of the voices of those earliest Gentile Christians, the Judaizers are being heard. There is an ever-growing awareness that the origins of Christianity reside in ancient Judaism, that the object of Christian worship lived on earth as a Jew, and that Christianity is quite Jewish in many respects. Perhaps we can also reclaim, to some extent, the Biblical holidays for the insights and perspectives that they can provide and that are sorely needed for our time.

What might Christians gain from reexamining, reclaiming, and celebrating some facets of the Biblical holidays? The sessions that follow offer some insight and perspective to serve as a starting point to answer this question. Perhaps we can rekindle anew some of the spirit of those Christians and Jews who once so long ago stood before God together in worship and celebration. It is in such a spirit of hope that this book is offered.

WAYS TO USE THIS BOOK

Perhaps you'd like to help family members, students, or parishioners better understand the rich, diverse Jewish foundations of their Christian roots, but don't know where to look. This innovative, groundbreaking book may be the answer.

Jewish holiday celebrations are rich and varied (Orthodox - Ashkenazic and Sephardic, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist). This book serves as an introduction to that richness and variety. Through discussions and activities for children and adults it presents the Biblical-Jewish holidays as Jews have observed/observe them and invites Christians to experience some aspects of those observances.

Any part of the book can be used independently, depending on the reader's needs. It may be helpful to study/present a holiday or observance just prior to its occurrence in the Jewish liturgical calendar. (See Appendix A.)

Many Jewish holidays celebrate God as Creator; all Jewish holidays observe an historical event that has shaped the Jewish people in their covenantal relationship with God. Christians can reflect on and gain new insights into the latter aspect of the Jewish holidays. But they can also join in celebrating God as Creator. Emphasis has been placed on certain aspects of holidays that celebrate God as Creator.

Each chapter presents a **Background**, providing information from Second Temple times and more modern observances that relate to the celebration; and a **Christian Connection**, that when applicable describes the manner in which Christians have adapted observances from the Jewish foundation of a particular holiday. A facilitator will need to read this section carefully before leading a session.

A **Story Page** for young children relates a dialogue for each celebration. The stories are set in Second Temples times to help children imagine holiday observances Jesus might have experienced. Throughout the centuries these celebrations have changed dramatically in some aspects and remained constant in others. Children are encouraged to discover these differences. Photos or other illustrations of first century Holy Land will expand children's view of Jesus' time.

Session Plans are divided into Primary, Intermediate, Youth, and Adult sections providing discussion materials, questions, and activities that could be used in a 45 min – 1 hr period. For shorter sessions, or for different uses, a facilitator can select the parts of each session that would be most relevant for the group using it. Some sessions require materials collected in advance of presentation.

Within each chapter there are also **Parish** and **Family Observances**. These can be helpful with planning appropriate activities celebrating the liturgical year. They also encourage fuller parish and community participation. Any one concept within a chapter can be used

as a starting point for a parish and/or community project. These are opportunities to help a larger group grow in interfaith understanding.

Each chapter includes a brief **Liturgy**. The sessions indicate what part of each liturgy may be appropriate for the different audiences. Chapter 8 on the Holocaust offers three approaches to liturgy. Permission is granted for liturgies to be reproduced for use in a small group setting.

Activity Pages include worksheets or cutout activities. Permission is granted to reproduce these pages for use in a small group setting. Answers to worksheet pages are found within the appropriate sessions. When possible, copy the cutout activities on a heavier stock paper. Or for some, prepare cardboard cutouts for participants to trace onto colored construction paper or other heavy paper. Materials required are listed on the Activity Page itself, or within the related session plan. Youngsters can provide service and enjoy working with young children by helping with the more complex cutouts.

Each **Appendix** offers additional materials to help readers benefit from the resources within. The **Glossary** and **Bibliography** serve the same purpose.

This book is designed to serve as a source of information for all who wish to increase their knowledge of the rich foundation Judaism has brought to the world in general and to Christianity in particular.

Be enriched and enjoy. Shalom.



**“[THE SABBATH]
IS A SIGN FOREVER
BETWEEN ME AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL
THAT IN SIX DAYS
THE LORD MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH,
AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY HE RESTED,
AND WAS REFRESHED.”**

EXODUS 31:17

CHAPTER 1

SHABBAT

“CALL THE SABBATH A DELIGHT”

ISAIAH 58:13C

Background

Since First Temple times **Shabbat** (shah baht'), the Sabbath observance, has been above all a day of rest. Not only must the people rest, but also their slaves, livestock, and any resident aliens (Deut 5:14). On this day they are to remember their past as Egyptian slaves and who it was that rescued them (Deut 5:15) — that God is sovereign. This call for rest is also part of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:8-11).

Shabbat gained in importance during the Babylonian exile. Ezekiel blamed the Jews' deportation on their failure to properly observe Shabbat. He saw the exile as God's punishment for their lapses (Ezek 22:4-8) (*See Ch 10 Tisha b'Av*). Yet, because life in Babylonia was pleasant in many ways for Jews, there arose a genuine concern about assimilation. But most Jewish exiles yearned to return to their holy city Jerusalem (Ps 137:4-6). The strict observance of Shabbat became a way to worship God as well as remain a Jewish people even though surrounded by a dominant culture which celebrated a different religion.

Priestly writings at the time of the exile gave another reason for celebrating Shabbat. They linked the observance to God's creative activity: for six days God created and then rested on the seventh. Shabbat was given to Israel as a sign and covenant of God as Creator (Ex 20:8-11; 31:12-

17). The Sabbath is the first thing God sanctified and is therefore Israel's holiest time.

When some exiles began their return to Jerusalem with Ezra, they brought their stronger observance of Shabbat back with them. This observance would become the norm. All trading was forbidden on the Sabbath and the gates of Jerusalem were closed to keep traders out (Neh 10:32; 13:15-18; 13:19-22).

Just how strongly Shabbat came to be observed can be seen in the Maccabean period (*See Ch 4 Hanukkah*) when the Jews suffered death rather than break the Shabbat rest to defend themselves. Following this disaster, the Shabbat rules could be broken in order to fight defensively against attack.

By late Second Temple times, Shabbat observances as they would be celebrated down the centuries were in place. By Jesus' day the Pharisees had eased some of the restrictions to make the day easier for ordinary people to observe. (Mishnah Shabbat 18:3) Some of these Shabbat prohibitions are referred to in the New Testament. For example, Jesus is depicted as bending some of the rules by plucking grain in the field and healing the sick on Shabbat (Mt 12:1-4,9-11; Mk 3:1-5). These were minor infractions for it was allowed to break the rules to save a life or to assist a woman giving birth.

During Second Temple times readings of both the Torah, the writings of Moses (Acts 15:21) and the Prophets (Acts 13:27) were part of every Shabbat along with other benedictions and prayers. Those living outside Jerusalem observed Shabbat with services in the synagogue. It was also observed with more private rituals: the lighting of the lamps (Mishnah Shabbat 2:6), reciting a blessing over wine, Kiddush (Mishnah Berakhot 8:1); blessing the bread, ha-Motzi; and the concluding ceremony, Havdalah (Mishnah Berakhot 8:5). The rituals of Kiddush and Havdalah are still celebrated today.

The woman of the house ushered in the Shabbat. She kindled the Sabbath lamps, blessing them “to remember the Sabbath day” (Ex 20:8) and “to observe the Sabbath day” (Deut 5:12) thus commemorating creation and the Exodus. It was this ritual of Kiddush for Shabbat along with the blessings over bread at every meal, that some scholars believe served as the origin of the Last Supper rather than the rituals of the Passover meal. (The Eastern Church has never considered the Passover meal to have been the origin of the Eucharist.) Some believe it would be more appropriate for the Eucharist to have been celebrated at a meal where Gentiles could have been present. The Passover, a Seder meal, would not have allowed for that participation. (Ex 13:43-45)

With the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the temple services ceased but other customs and rituals of Shabbat remained in place. The Shabbat table with two loaves of hallah (sweet bread) became a remembrance of the Temple altar. Over the centuries the rituals have been enlarged upon. The synagogue liturgy of the late first century served as the nucleus for later developments. A Friday evening worship service began in addition to the Saturday morning service. In the Middle Ages further rituals were added to home ceremonies; for example, the husband blessing his wife and children.

For 3,000 years Israel has kept Shabbat and Shabbat has kept Israel. Like all other days in the Jewish calendar, Shabbat begins at sundown.

Shabbat remains a day to refrain from the ordinary labors of the week; a day to be in harmony with nature; a day to worship God; a day to enjoy family; and ultimately a day of peace.

Christian Connection

Early Christians observed both Shabbat (on the seventh day, Saturday) and the Lord’s Day (the first day, Sunday) (Rev 1:10). With the destruction of the Temple and fall of Jerusalem (*See Ch 10 Tisha b’ Av.*), the separation of the Jewish and Christian communities became more complete. By the end of the first century many Christians were worshipping not on Saturday in the synagogues, but on Sunday in their own houses of assembly.

The fledgling Christian church appropriated some of the main elements of the Jewish Shabbat observance into their liturgy. The synagogue service of prayers and readings for Shabbat was transferred to Sunday. The Eucharist, which may have had its origins in the rituals of Shabbat, was added to the scripture/prayer service to form the early Christian liturgy. Christians celebrate Sunday as the feast of the resurrection — the first day of the new creation.

For the Eastern Church, Saturday has remained a day on which to commemorate God’s creative activity and creation itself. As the Apostolic Constitutions (4th century) states: “But keep the Sabbath and the Lord’s day festival because the former is the memorial of the creation, and the latter of the resurrection.” In view of the existing ecological crisis, the Christian community would do well to celebrate Saturday in commemoration of God’s creative activity.

In 1998, Pope John Paul II emphasized the sacredness of Sundays in his letter, *The Day of the Lord*. “It is not difficult to note that this ‘holy day’ is extraordinarily rich in significance. Its religious sense certainly does not conflict with human values, which make Sunday a time of rest, of enjoyment of nature and of more social relations. These are values, which sadly, risk being conceded to a hedonistic and frenetic way of living.”

A DAY OF JOY - THE SABBATH

It was Friday afternoon. Deborah was helping her mother prepare the evening's Sabbath meal. "Do you think the hallah will be ready before sunset?" she asked. No cooking was allowed after the sun set. That is when the Sabbath began. The Sabbath meals were the most special of the week and Deborah didn't want this one ruined.

"Everything will be ready, including the sweet bread" her mother assured her. "Is Anna back yet?"

"No, not yet," answered Deborah.

Anna had taken the food for Saturday's picnic to their favorite spot. Nothing could be carried on the Sabbath, so the picnic food was taken the day before.

Jacob and Benjamin came in from their father's shop to get cleaned up. Soon six trumpet blasts would signal the beginning of the Sabbath.

"OUOUOU." They recognized the first trumpet blast coming from the synagogue roof. At this blast, everyone stopped their work and headed for home.

"OUOUOU," came the second blast. Jacob and Benjamin knew their father would be home soon. Anna came in just in time to help prepare the lamps for lighting.

"OUOUOU," the third blast came as the children gathered around their mother. She lit the Sabbath lights, marking the beginning of the Sabbath.

"OUOUOU, OUOUOU, OUOUOU," came the final blasts.

Bathed in the glow and warmth of the lamps, the family sat down to eat their Sabbath meal. First their father said Kiddush, the special Sabbath blessing over the wine. He praised and thanked God for the gift of creation. The blessing reminded everyone that God rested on the seventh day after creating the universe and called on all of creation to do the same.

Next their father said the blessing over the hallah. This blessing actually began every meal — not just on the Sabbath. The family then enjoyed their special meal.

Early the next morning, the older boys went with their father to synagogue. They would read from the Bible and pray together. By noontime, everyone was ready to celebrate this day of rest. Deborah, Jacob, and Benjamin raced each other to their picnic spot. Simeon followed as fast as his short legs would take him. Benjamin got there first and began to spread out the picnic cloth. He wished they could have picnics every day.

"But, then they wouldn't be special would they?" his mother laughed.

"What do you like best about our picnics?" their father asked the children.

"The food!" exclaimed Jacob. Benjamin was too busy eating to answer.

"The wildflowers," added Anna.

"I like chasing butterflies," Deborah called as she ran by.

And, their father added, "I think Simeon likes the bugs."

Today, Jacob and Anna were especially interested in a flock of storks on their spring flight northward. "I wonder where they came from," sighed Jacob.

"I wonder where they're going," whispered Anna. "It's good to see Mom and Dad resting, isn't it?" Anna asked as she pointed to their parents leaning against a tree. "They work so hard during the week."

"Uh huh," answered Jacob, enjoying his own rest.

The day ended all too soon. The family repacked their picnic basket for one of the children to pick up on Sunday. Back home they would share the Havdalah (prayer) with the Havdalah candle lit. These last blessings would end their Sabbath — a day of joy.

* *How Jewish Holidays may have been celebrated in Jesus' Time*

SESSIONS

These sessions require some preparation beforehand. Supplies needed: card table or cleared desk top, tablecloth, two candlesticks, two white candles, matches, drinking glass, grape juice, wine for adults, paper cups, *hallah* (sweet bread), cloth cover for *hallah*, Havdalah candle (or two candles stuck together), box of spices (clove and bay leaf), paste or glue, crayons or markers.

While emphasizing and discussing family togetherness, be sensitive to those whose families differ from the nuclear family pattern.

PRIMARY (6-8 YEAR OLDS)

1. Discuss the special day of rest and worship during the week.

- What day of the week do we, as Christians, celebrate as a day of worship and rest? (Sunday)
- What day of the week do our Jewish friends celebrate as a day of worship and rest? (Saturday. This day of worship and rest is called Sabbath or Shabbat. Note that the Sabbath actually begins at sundown on Friday and ends an hour after sundown on Saturday.)

Explain that the very first Christians celebrated the Sabbath on Saturday and Jesus' resurrection on the first day of the week - Sunday. Later they celebrated only Sunday as a special day of the week.

2. Read aloud the story "A Day of Joy - The Sabbath" to introduce children to the celebration of the Sabbath. (*See Story Page.*) Note that Shabbat is the Hebrew name for Sabbath. Explain that Jewish people today still celebrate the Sabbath in many of the same ways that Jesus did. The Sabbath is a day of rest to be spent with family and friends, and a day to worship God.

3. Discuss briefly that in Jesus' day, the Sabbath celebrated creation. Read Ex 20:8-11 to the children.

- What are some ways we can remember God as Creator? (We can be thankful for what God has made, take care of creation.)
- What are some ways we can help take care of God's creation? (not waste water, recycle, not litter...)

4. Celebrate part of the Liturgy that welcomes the Sabbath. Adapt it to best fit the needs of your group. Put candlesticks, juice and hallah on a table in the front of the room. Light the candles, say the blessing (*See Liturgy: Lighting the Candles*). Point out that God's first act of creation was to create light. Distribute paper cups with juice to each child. Recite Kiddush (*See Liturgy: Kiddush*.) and drink the juice (as a way of remembering all of God's creative acts). Say the blessing over the hallah (*See Liturgy: ha-Motzi*.) and distribute the bread among the children.

5. Activities

Option A. Have children choose one or two activities they would really like to do with their families on their day of rest. Have them write these down and give the notes to their parents.

Option B. It is traditional before Shabbat and other holidays to set aside some money for charity - to share God's blessings with those in need. This gift for charity, *tzedakah*, is put into a special container for this purpose, a *tzedakah* box. Hand out the Tzedakah Box Activity. (*See Activity Page.*) Encourage children to draw pictures and help them assemble the box. This container will hold coins if handled carefully. Since celebration of Shabbat includes creation, children might want to donate their *tzedakah* money to a group that is trying to "repair the world" (Tikkun Olam); or to a group helping other children. (*See Appendix B: Sources of Information.*)

Option C. Mostly Jewish boys and men, though also some women, wear a yarmulke or kippah to

remind themselves that God is always present. Hand out the “Yarmulke (Kippah) Activity.” Have the children cut out and adjust the skullcap to fit their head. (It can be glued or stapled once a child is ready to wear it.) The children can draw pictures and/or print an appropriate verse around the edge of their yarmulkes.

Option D. Using flour clay (or other clay), have children make two simple candle holders to hold the Sabbath candles. Each child can use two balls of clay. They use a candle to make an impression in the clay to hold the candle. They remove the candle to allow the holders to dry. These can be painted when dry.

Option E. Make special placemats (11” x 17”) to use at Saturday/Sunday meals. Use paper and laminate (expensive), or use ConTact paper. Placemats could also be made of cloth using fabric

paints. Suggest children draw or cut out pictures reminding them of God’s creation.

6. Explain that in Jesus’ time, as well as today, there is a ceremony to bid farewell to Shabbat and to welcome the workweek. Celebrate a brief Havdalah ceremony with the children. Light the Havdalah candle, bless the juice, the spices, and the candle. Recite the following prayer:

Be with us this week as we are with our families, play with our friends, and study in school. Help us this week to act in ways that will make the earth a better place for all your creatures — people, animals, plants, and birds. You have made and love us all. Amen.

(*See also Liturgy: Havdalah.*) Shorten the prayers as needed for your group.

INTERMEDIATE (9-11 YEAR OLDS)

1. Read Ex 20:8-11, and/or Ex 31:12-17.

- What holiday are the people told to observe? (Sabbath, or Shabbat)
- Who is to observe this holiday? (everyone, including animals)
- How are people to observe the holiday? (by resting, doing no work)
- Why are they to observe the holiday? (because God created the universe and then rested, and they are to rest from their labors in the same way)
- Which of the Ten commandments involves the Sabbath? (the third)... How do we as Christians observe the Sabbath? (by resting, attending church services)

2. See Primary #1 for clarification of the Saturday/ Sunday observances.

3. In Jesus’ time and today, Shabbat celebrates creation. Explain some of the customs to the youngsters or read “A Day of Joy - The Sabbath.”

(*See Primary #2.*) The following verses describe some of Jesus’ activity on the Sabbath (Lk 4:16-20, 14:1).

- What are some of the things that Jesus did? (read Torah, worshipped in the synagogue, ate with friends)
- What are some things you do to celebrate Sunday? (Youngsters share their own experiences.)
- Are some of these activities the same? (Compare responses.)

4. See Primary #3. Expand the discussion. Emphasize that God continues to create. People can participate in that process either positively or negatively.

- What are some examples of creation continuing? (birth of babies, animals, birds; new plants, grass...)
- In what ways can people help protect God’s creation? (taking care of the earth, fixing the damage already done...)

5. Celebrate Kiddush and ha-Motzi. See Primary #4.

- Does this ritual remind you of anything? (Youngsters might connect this to sharing the Eucharist.)

6. Shabbat (or Sunday) is a time for families to be together.

- What would you like to do with your family on Sunday? (Youngsters will express individual wishes.)
- What makes it hard for families to sometimes be together on Sundays? (Youngsters may share personal experiences. This may be where the reality of divorce may affect their answers.)

7. Activities

Option A. Encourage youngsters to make yarmulkes using the “Yarmulke (Kippah) Activity” to wear during the Liturgy. (See *Activity Page*.) They may also enjoy helping younger children make them to wear during their liturgy. Point out Jews wear them to synagogue to remind them that God is ever present, helping them to do the right thing.

Option B. Explain that on Shabbat evening parents bless their children. Have youngsters create blessings for them to bless their parents, brothers/sisters, and pets.

Option C. See Primary #5.

8. Celebrate Havdalah. (See *Primary #6 or Liturgy: Havdalah*.)

YOUTH (12-15 YEAR OLDS)

1. Read Ex 20:8-11 and 31:12-17.

- What holiday is described? (the Sabbath)
- On what day is the Sabbath observed? (Saturday)
- Who is to observe this holiday? (everyone, animals)
- What set of laws is the Sabbath a part of? (Ten Commandments)
- What does this holiday commemorate? (God’s creative activity)
- What is this holiday a sign of? (God’s covenant with Israel)
- How is this holiday to be observed? (rest, no work is to be done)

2. The New Testament mentions the Shabbat observance but it does not emphasize the great importance attached to its observance in Jesus’ time. Direct participants to read Mk 1:21, Lk 4:16-20, Acts 13:27; 15:21.

- What is described in these verses? (the synagogue service for the Sabbath)
- What are some of the practices in the synagogue? (reading of Scripture, the five

books of Moses, and the Prophets every week; preaching)

- How does this compare with worship services you are familiar with? (Participants will share their experiences.)

3. Shabbat has been described as a day of rest on which no work was to be done. There were many “rules” about what could and could not be done. The rules were also seen as a way of setting this day apart and making it holy. Some of these rules are mentioned in the New Testament. Direct participants to read Mt 12:1-2, Jn 5:19, Lk 13:10-16, Acts 1:12.

- What are some things that cannot be done? (harvesting, carrying things, traveling long distances, healing) Though not mentioned here cooking was also forbidden.
- What are some things that can be done? (looking after animals, saving life — human and animal) Women giving birth were assisted as they would have been on any other day of the week.

Jesus, in some ways, seems to stretch the rules more than breaking Shabbat (Jn 9:16).

4. The New Testament mentions some of the public observances of Shabbat. What it is entirely silent on are the private observances among family and friends. Have participants read Lk 14:1.

- What else was done on the Sabbath? (dining)

5. In the home there would be the lighting of the lamps on Friday as the sun set. Kiddush was recited over a cup of wine in commemoration of God's creative acts. Today the Shabbat candles are still lit and Kiddush is recited before the evening meal in Jewish homes. Light the Shabbat candles and recite Kiddush and ha-Motzi. (*See Liturgy: Lighting the Candles, Kiddush, ha-Motzi.*)

- Does this ritual remind you of anything in your own worship experience? (Participants might connect this to the Eucharistic celebration.)
- How might your appreciation of the Eucharist change knowing it may have been taken from the Kiddush ritual? (Participants will share.)

6. Discuss other ways to commemorate an observance of creation. See Primary #3 and Intermediate #4.

7. Activities

Option A. The Pharisees and later the Rabbis all made rulings about what was considered work and what activity was proper on the Sabbath. Work meant those actions that interfered with God's

creation. On Shabbat people should not control or damage creation. Considering these ideas of work, the ideas examined in #6, that this is also a day for celebrating creation, and a day for the family, have participants write guidelines suitable for our time. (It is interesting to note how many of the Orthodox Jewish observances — like not driving — benefit creation.)

Option B. Explain that in the Middle Ages additional ritual blessings were added. On Friday evening before Kiddush is recited the husband/father praises his wife and blesses his children. The wife may also praise her husband and both parents bless the children. Have participants write blessings for parents to use with their children, for brothers and sisters to bless each other, for children to bless their parents, and for the family pet (animals are also affected by Shabbat). Arrange to put some of these blessings in the church/school bulletin as an insert.

Option C. Participants may be interested in the "Tzedakah Box Activity" which they can use for this and future lessons. (*See Activity Page and Primary #5, Option B.*)

8. In Jesus' day, Shabbat and the third, concluding meal was followed by the Havdalah ceremony. Celebrate Havdalah. (*See Liturgy: Havdalah.*)

ADULT (16 YEARS AND OLDER)

1. Explain that God's people have celebrated Shabbat for 3,000 years. Around the time of the exile (587-538 BCE), in the priestly writings, the reason for this observance is linked to God's creative activity. Read Ex 20:8-11; 31:12-17. This understanding of Shabbat as a celebration of creation was the prevalent one during Jesus' day and is still a dominant theme in today's celebration. Mention how early Christians observed Shabbat in addition to the Lord's Day (Sunday). The Apostolic Constitutions set aside Saturday as the day to remember creation and Sunday as the Lord's day (Eastern Churches).

2. As they experience this Shabbat liturgy, ask participants to reflect on its various aspects and to consider whether or how they might adapt some of them to their family's religious observances. Examples could include making Saturday more special, or incorporating some of the ideas into their Sunday observances. NOTE: Some of the questions presented are for personal reflection, not for class discussion.

3. Shabbat is a day of rest; a day on which no work is to be done. The strict observance of this day precludes such activities as driving, cooking,

carrying anything, or writing, among other things. These restrictions are meant to set this day aside as a holy day devoted to God, to personal spiritual development, contemplation, study, and enjoyment of family.

Point out that many states have observed “blue laws” on Sundays. This meant no businesses could be open then.

- Does anyone remember these laws? (All answers will be the result of individual reflection.)
- Do you think “blue laws” were a good idea?
- Why do you think they were abolished?
- What does this say about Americans?

The following questions are for personal reflection and not to be shared with the group.

- How do you/your children/your family usually spend the weekend?
- Do you try to catch up on work for the “office” or do those chores for which there is no time during the week?
- Are there things that really don’t need doing? Could you spend more time with God, yourself, and your family?
- What would you like to see your family do together with this set-aside time?
- How could you use this special time to benefit your spiritual development and reflection?

The Shabbat liturgies that follow are more modern renditions of the observances of Jesus’ day (lamp lighting, Kiddush, ha-Motzi, Havdalah). Choose different people to recite the texts.

4. Friday evening as the sun sets, Shabbat begins and the woman of the house lights the candles. (*See Liturgy: Lighting the Candles.*) As you light the candles, remember that God’s first act was to create light. Prayers are then said for the family and home and for welcoming the Shabbat angels to the home.

5. Before the evening meal begins the husband praises his wife in the words of Prov 31:10-31 (and the wife praises her husband in the words of Ps 112:1-10.) Then the children are blessed. (*See*

Liturgy for the words of these blessings.) [It is perhaps worth noting that it is considered one of the joys of Shabbat for a husband and wife to engage in marital relations on this day.]

The following questions are for personal reflection.

- Could this be a meaningful ritual for you/your spouse and children?
- What words might you use to bless your spouse and children?

6. The Shabbat evening meal begins with the reciting of Kiddush - the blessing over a cup of wine in commemoration of God’s creative acts. Then ha-Motzi is recited - the blessing over the bread that is said before every meal. Recite the blessings. (*See Liturgy: Kiddush, ha-Motzi.*)

- What does this activity remind you of? (Some may connect this to the Eucharistic celebration.)
- How do you feel about the possibility that the Eucharist may be based on these rituals and not those of the Passover meal? (*Refer to Background.*)

7. In commemorating God’s creative activity, take time to reflect on people’s spiritual place and role in creation. (For a discussion of a celebration of humanity’s physical place in creation, *see Ch 3 Sukkot, Ch 5 Tu b’Shevat.*)

Following are some religious viewpoints in the Judeo-Christian tradition on humans’ place and role in creation.

Jewish: People are co-partners with God in creation to repair the world (Tikkun Olam) - to make God more present in the world.

Catholic: God created the world from nothing; the Holy Spirit remains active in this creation.

People have the power to participate in the continuation of creation in harmony with nature.

Protestant: People are given dominion over God’s creation. This means that, made in the image of God, people are to be stewards of God’s creation.

Any dominion is to be peaceful and benevolent.

Protestant (Fundamentalist): Humans can do anything they want to with creation because God

has given it to them. People are basically the only ones who have any standing or relationship to God; other creatures don't.

Eastern Orthodox: The universe is composed of the uncreated energies (energia) of God (though not the essence or being (ousia) of God. People are to cooperate with God (synergy) in bringing the universe to participate ever more fully in the uncreated energies of God (theosis).

- Compare and contrast these views. Can these views affect how people relate to creation? (Answers will reflect values seen in creation.)
- What does it mean to observe a day of rest, one in which no work is done? (Creation is not interfered with on this day.)
- How does such a day impact on creation? Does it decrease or increase the damage people cause to the environment? How? (decreases; less fuel expended; less use of natural resources...)

8. Those observing Shabbat spend Friday evening and/or Saturday morning in synagogue services. Saturday afternoon is spent in family activities or quiet time. What activities would you like to do

with your family during your day of worship and rest? (Children are being asked the same question in their lesson.)

9. The passing of Shabbat at sundown is marked by a special observance — Havdalah — that serves as a bridge between the sacred time of Shabbat and the rest of the week. This ritual also reminds observers that as they go back to work, it must be God's work for protecting creation and not for its damage and destruction.

The following questions are for personal reflection.

- Does your work, in any way, harm or damage other people?
- Does your work, in any way, harm or damage the environment?
- In what ways does your work “repair the world” (Tikkun Olam) both spiritually and literally?
- How can you participate with God as God continues to create the universe?
- How do you make God more present in what you do?

Conclude the reflection by reciting the Havdalah blessing. (*See Liturgy: Havdalah.*) Wish each other a good week.

FAMILY OBSERVANCE

Celebrate the Sabbath. Consider incorporating some of the rituals discussed above into your family observance. Whether it be Saturday or Sunday, try to make more time for your family to be together to do things. Take some time to relax, to talk with each other (turn off the TV, mobile phones, etc.), take a walk, and picnic together. Try to take more notice of creation; to enjoy it and to care for/repair it. (*See also Ch 11 Rosh Hodesh; celebrating Saturday evening to prolong Sabbath joy.*)

PARISH OBSERVANCE

Try to increase emphasis on creation, its appreciation and protection, in any Saturday services. Encourage some joint Jewish-Christian celebration of Shabbat. Contact a local synagogue receptive to having visitors at worship. Also ask if there would be some Jewish families willing to invite some Christian adults (with or without children) to share a Friday evening Shabbat meal with them.

Find out the Scripture readings, Torah, Haftorah, and Psalm for the week according to the Jewish liturgical calendar (see www.chabad.org or call your local synagogue.) How do the Scripture readings in your church compare?

LITURGIES FOR SHABBAT

LIGHTING THE CANDLES

(Two candles are lit by the mother customarily 20 minutes before sundown. The following blessing is accompanied by prayers for the home and family.)

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, by whose Mitzvot we are hallowed, who commands us to kindle the lights of Shabbat.ⁱ

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, asher kidshana b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.

PRAISES

The husband praises his wife in the words of Prov 31:10-31. The wife praises her husband in the words of Ps 112:1-10.

BLESSINGS OF THE CHILDREN

(Though this was traditionally done by the father, both parents may bless the children, placing their hands on each child's head as the following is recited.)

(for boys)

May God inspire you to live in the tradition of Ephraim and Menasheh who carried forward the life of our people.

(for girls)

May God inspire you to live in the tradition of Sarah and Rebekah, Rachel and Leah who carried forward the life of our people.

The Lord bless and keep you;

The Lord look kindly upon you and be gracious to you;

The Lord bestow His favor upon you and give you peace. Amen.ⁱⁱ

i *Gates of the House: The New Union Home Prayerbook*, (NY: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1977, p. 30)

ii *Ibid.*, p. 32

KIDDUSH

For Friday evening this blessing is said over a brimming cup of wine - a symbol of joy.

Now the whole universe - sky, earth, and all their array - was completed. With the seventh day God ended the work of creation; on the seventh day God rested, with all work completed. Then God blessed the seventh day and called it holy, for with this day God had completed the work of creation.

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

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-gafen.

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hallows us with His Mitzvot and takes delight in us. In love and favor God has made the holy Sabbath our heritage, as a reminder of the work of creation. It is first among our sacred days, and a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt.

O God You have chosen us and set us apart from all the peoples, and in love and favor have given us the Sabbath day as a sacred inheritance.

Blessed is the Lord, for the Sabbath and its holiness.ⁱⁱⁱ

HA-MOTZI

The blessing is said over a loaf of bread - the hallab; the bread is broken apart by hand. (A knife, an implement of war is NOT used to cut it.)

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who causes bread to come forth from the earth.^{iv}

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz.

iii Ibid., p. 33-34

iv Ibid., p. 34

HAVDALAH

The Havdalah candle is lit. All other lights should be off, or dimmed, during the Havdalah ceremony.

O Lord of the universe, happy is the one who trusts in You!
 Save us, O Lord, answer us O King, when we call upon You.
 Give us light and joy, gladness and honor as in the happiest days of Israel's past.
 Then we will lift up the cup to rejoice in Your saving power, and call out Your
 name in praise.^v

The following blessing is said over a cup of wine.

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

The following blessing is said over a box of spices, (clove and bay leaf).

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of all the spices.^{vii}

Hold up the candle.

The rabbis tell us: As night descended at the end of the world's first Sabbath, Adam feared and wept. Then God showed Adam how to make the fire, and by its light and warmth to dispel the darkness and its terrors. Kindling flame is a symbol of our first labor upon the earth.

Shabbat departs and the workday begins as we kindle fire. And we, who dread the night no more, thank God for the flame by which we turn earth's raw stuff into things of use and beauty.

v Ibid., p. 67-68

vi Ibid., p. 68

vii Ibid.

The candle's double wick reminds us that all qualities are paired. We have the power to create many different fires, some useful, others baneful. Let us be on guard never to let this gift of fire devour human life, sear our cities and scorch fields, to foul the pure air of heaven, obscuring the very skies. Let the fire we kindle be holy; let it bring light and warmth to all humanity.^{viii}

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the light of fire.^{ix}

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei m'orei ha-eish.

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who separates the sacred from the 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.^x

Before the wine is drunk a few drops are put in a dish and dipping the candle in the wine puts out the flame.

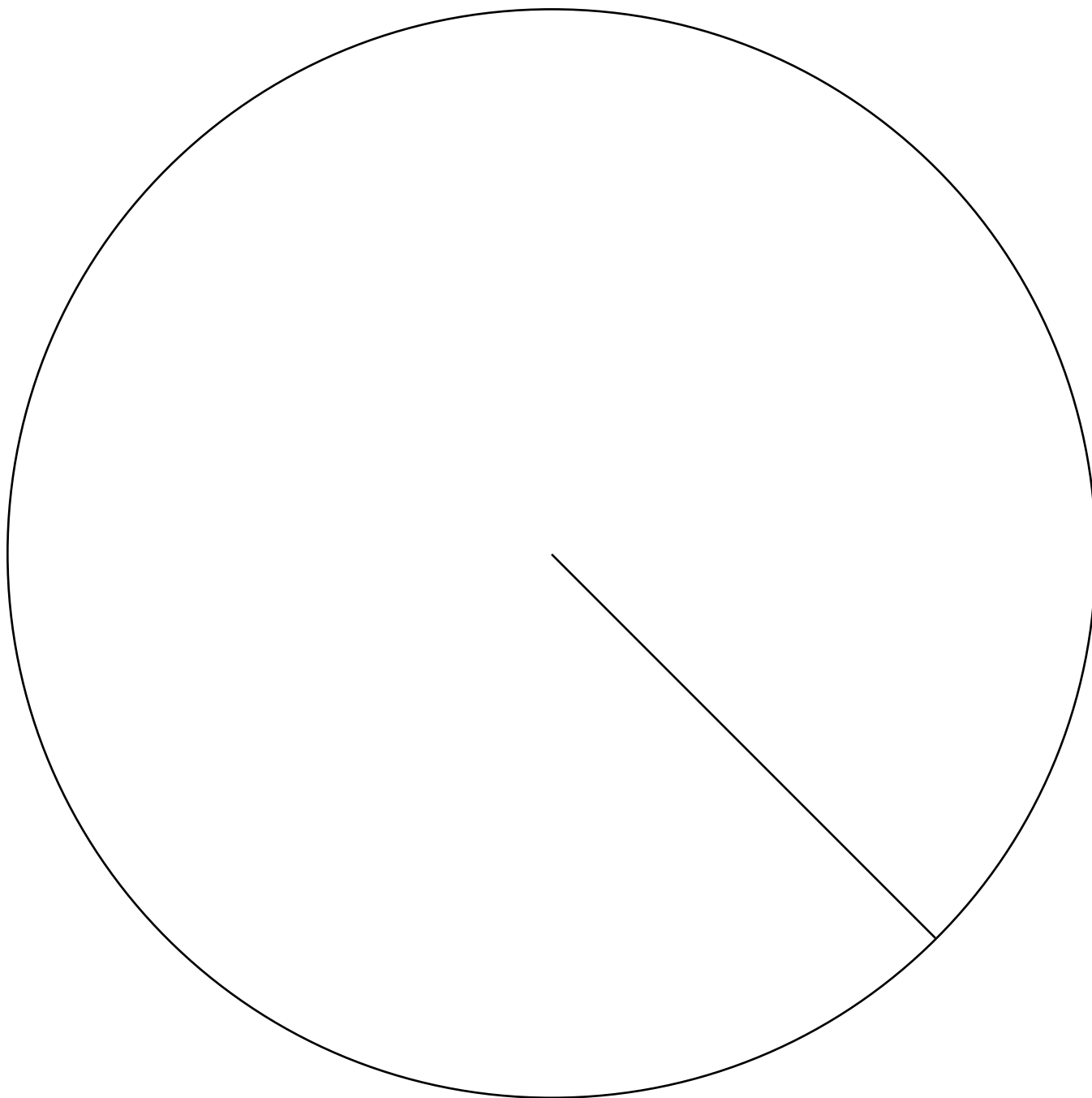
viii Ibid., p. 69

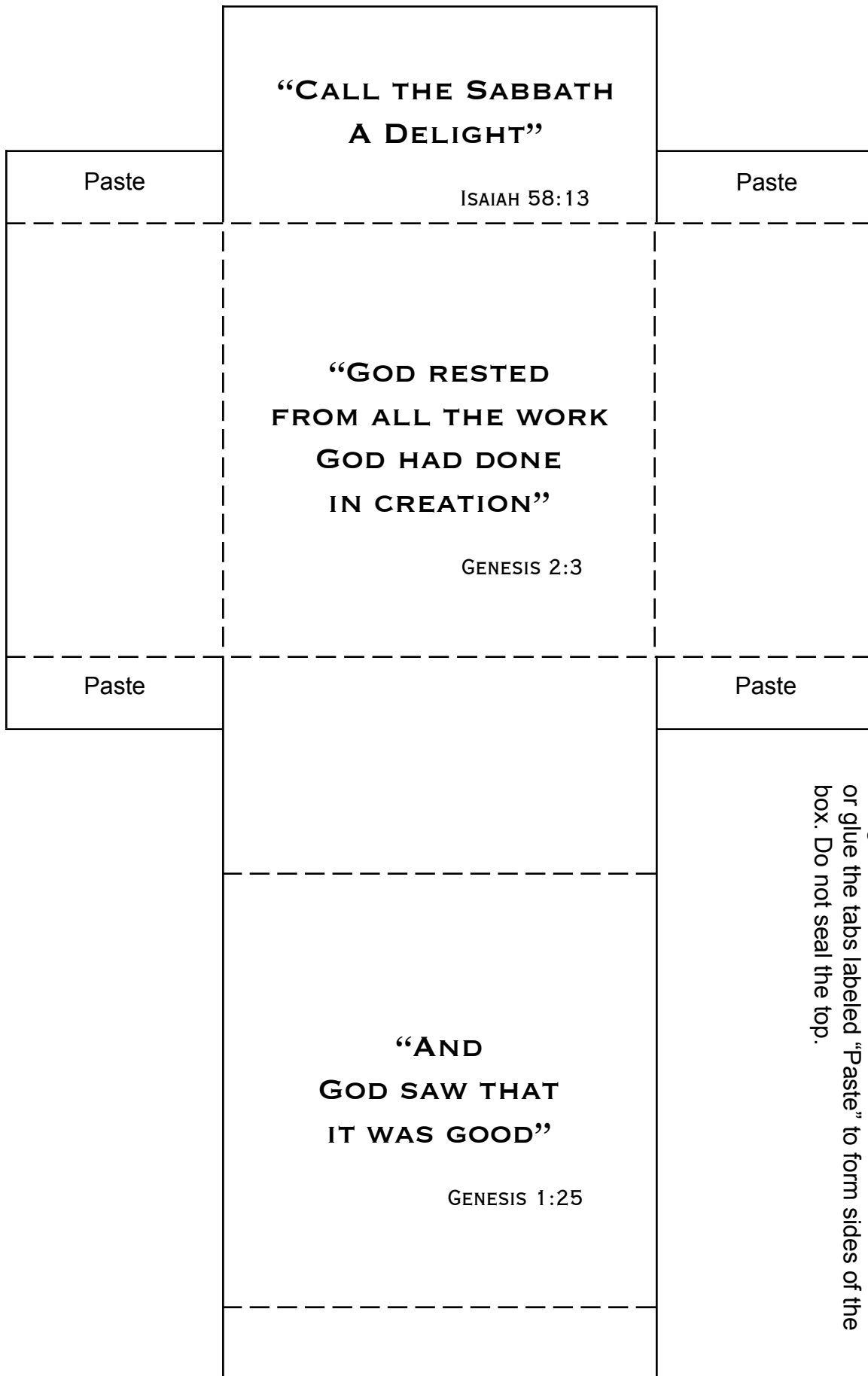
ix Ibid.

x Ibid., p. 70

YARMULKE (KIPPAH) ACTIVITY

Directions: Cut along solid lines. Fold flap over (adjust to head size), glue.





Directions: First color the box. Then cut out the box along the solid lines and fold on the dotted lines. Paste or glue the tabs labeled “Paste” to form sides of the box. Do not seal the top.