

# Shabbat.Shalom

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**An Israeli celebration on the holy free day**

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**"If we return to the Land of Israel, we must return with the Sabbath, it is our symbol, filled with beauty and grace, and from it we can elicit beauty for all our lifestyles".**

Chaim Nachman Bialik

# Shabbat.Shalom

**Guidelines for the regulation of the place and meaning of Shabbat in Israel.**

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Cover page quote: From a speech given by Bialik at the cornerstone laying of Ohel Shem in Tel Aviv, 2 Iyyar, 5688 (1928)

# The Shabbat narrative

The ethical, ideological and national foundation of the Sabbath is found in the Bible, in legends and in the Halakha. It is there that we find the beating heart that has preserved it for generations, even in the absence of a sovereign national home for the Jews. The encounter between Judaism and the Zionist project led to normative innovations regarding the nature of Shabbat in the Jewish state to come. Analysis of Jewish thinking throughout the 20th century offers us seven justifications, seven different models for interpreting the Sabbath: a day of rest, a day of culture, a national day, a day of silence (given technological developments), a family day, a day that highlights one's freedom of choice, and a tool for constant renewal. Following the establishment of the State, the expressions of Shabbat were reduced to the issue of not working and making it a day of rest. Thus the values of Shabbat were, for the most part, ignored. Over time, with no normative decision or government policy in sight, Shabbat was subordinated to demographic and social trends, as well as economic forces in Israel and elsewhere. These developments led to dissatisfaction among all communities with the nature of Shabbat in the public space.

A comprehensive in-depth study we

conducted indicated two main trends pertaining to Shabbat in Israel. The first was a significant strengthening of traditional Shabbat customs among individuals and families: the number of those who light Shabbat candles and say Kiddush has risen sharply in a manner that does not match the demographic changes, and 82% of the Jews in Israel regularly sit down together for a Friday evening meal. At the same time, in the public space we see an erosion of the status of Shabbat: the number of people working and shopping on Shabbat has risen over the years; it is perceived as a religious element, and the public's attitude toward it is almost always negative. The combination of these trends signals the loss of the potential of Shabbat on a national scale. Cynical political use of Shabbat from both sides has become widespread, so that it has become a polarizing factor that arouses feelings of hatred, which is diametrically opposed to its potential for cohesion and inclusion, given its values and long history. In a long and profound process involving dozens of experts, spiritual leaders, public leaders and activists in the field from all communities in Israel, we have formulated new guidelines. The PNIMA guidelines may serve as a model for resolving other issues that are threatening the unity of Israeli society.

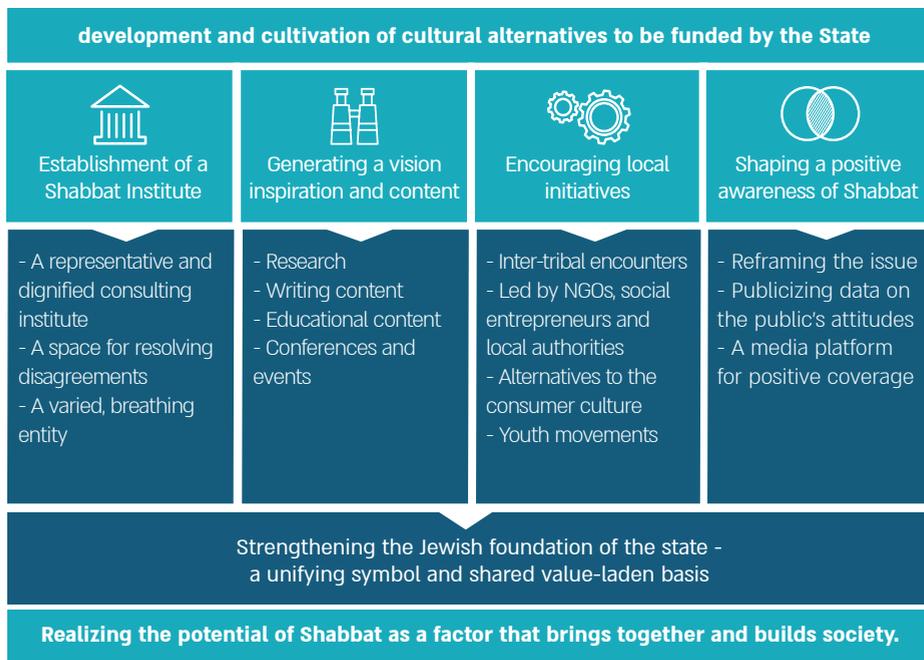
## New guidelines for the Israeli Shabbat

The model you see below is the essence of the new Shabbat guidelines. It calls for a paradigm shift. The guidelines render redundant the prevailing mindset calling for organizing the shared Israeli space in such a way that members of all communities will be satisfied. The guidelines offer a practical framework for a Shabbat that is a unifying value-laden national symbol that enables every community to live its own life and highlight its uniqueness. The Jewish Shabbat recognized two main components: "Observe" – pertaining mainly to the customary prohibitions of working on Shabbat, and "Remember" – pertaining to the consolidation of the awareness of Shabbat, which instills the values of this day in the consciousness of the individual and the public. Since the establishment of the State, public discourse has focused on the component of "Observe" in the public space. Thus, it is almost entirely about what is open and what is closed. We propose setting aside the question of "Observe" at this stage, and focus on the identity-related component of "Remember". It is Israel's responsibility to provide free cultural and leisure projects that express the various cultural values of Shabbat in a format that enables all citizens to come together; a transition from laws and coercion to "enabling" (i.e., regulation underpinned by as much 'enabling' as possible will lead to a thawing of the discourse surrounding Shabbat). Local initiatives will broaden the cultural offering on Shabbat and will allow a range of activities that encourage intercultural and inter-tribal

encounters, reduce the surge of people rushing to engage in commerce and the consumer culture, all without coercion. The guidelines are based on three pillars: national, conscious and cultural.

The State should set up a 'Shabbat Institute' to express the meaning of Shabbat at the national-symbolic level. This would be an independent body with high public prestige that would generate updated thinking about Shabbat. It should be an ethical compass, an inspiring 'pillar of fire'; a focal point for positioning Shabbat as relevant to everyone in the country and to Jews all around the world. This Shabbat Institute will develop modules of cultural activity expressing the various Shabbat values. In terms of consciousness, there must be a dramatic reduction in the negativity surrounding Shabbat. There must be a move to raise awareness of the centrality and significance of Shabbat as a key cultural asset in the Israeli experience. Data about the attitudes of the majority of Israelis toward Shabbat should be publicized, together with the value of tradition alongside the need for a guideline that enables variance and diversity. At the practical level, cultural alternatives should be promoted through local authorities and NGOs according to the models developed by the Shabbat Institute. Handing the "keys to Shabbat" over to local initiatives will develop a broad-scale market offering a range of options that will enable all citizens to get the most out of the Shabbat that suits them.

## Our Suggestion



### Implementation procedure

- 1.** Establishment of a Shabbat Institute funded by the State and national entities
- 2.** Via the Ministry of Culture, the State will determine criteria, call for cooperation, fund, measure and evaluate diverse cultural activities for Shabbat.
- 3.** Via the Ministry of Education, the State will seek to expand youth activities, movements, and organizations on Shabbat by adapting regulations and activities together with the local authorities.
- 4.** Formulation of a plan to promote inclusive Shabbat activities in inter-tribal towns, while building a variety of formats and pilot programs.
- 5.** Enlisting digital and media partners and opinion leaders to promote positive coverage of the Shabbat in the media.
- 6.** Local authorities will be given a significant amount of leeway regarding activities within their jurisdiction.
- 7.** No parallel legislation procedures will be promoted on issues of State and religion.