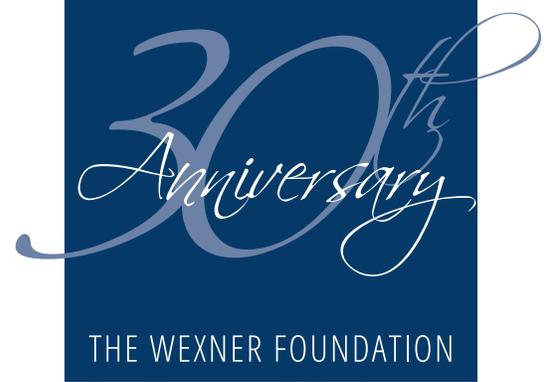


LEADERSHIP & LANGUAGE: TAKE SHABBAT, FOR INSTANCE

RABBI LAWRENCE A. HOFFMAN



KEEPING THE SABBATH: LIMITS, TRUTH OR MEANING?

*I RAISE MY CUP IN LOVE OF YOU,
PEACE TO YOU, O SEVENTH DAY!
SIX DAYS OF WORK ARE LIKE YOUR SLAVES
I WORK MY WAY THROUGH THEM. . . .
BECAUSE OF MY LOVE FOR YOU, O DAY OF MY DELIGHT*
JUDAH HALEVI

A. BIBLICAL BASIS

1. EXODUS 31: 13-15, 17

You must keep My Sabbaths, for this is a sign between Me and you throughout the generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, have made you holy. You shall keep the Sabbath for it is holy to you. Whoever profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does work on it shall be cut off from among his kin. Six days may work be done but on the seventh day there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord. . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and on the seventh day He ceased from work and was refreshed.

B. RABBINIC LIMITS

2. BABYLONIAN TALMUD, SHABBAT 118a

Rabbi Yochanan said in Rabbi Yose's name, "Those who delight in the Sabbath will be given an unbounded heritage. . . ." Rav Judah said in Rav's name, "Those who delight in the Sabbath are given their heart's desires. . . ." How does one delight therein? Rav Judah, the son of Rav Samuel ben Shilat said in Rav's name, "With a dish of beets, a large fish and heads of garlic." Rabbi Chiya bar Ashi said in Rav's name, "Even a small thing, if it is prepared in honor of the Sabbath, is a delight."

3. MISHNAH SHABBAT 7:2

The main categories of labor [that are prohibited on Shabbat] are forty less one: sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, sorting, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking; shearing wool, washing it, beating it, dyeing it, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying, loosening, sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches; trapping a deer, slaughtering it, skinning it, salting it, curing its hide, scraping it, cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters; building, tearing down, putting out a fire, kindling a fire, striking with a hammer, carrying from one domain into another.

4. PARAPHRASE OF MISHNAH SHABBAT 7:2

The main categories of labor [that are prohibited on Shabbat] are forty less one:
baking bread (for the priests, the "shewbread")
preparing fabric (for the tabernacle's curtains and embroidery)
preparing a scroll (for writing)
building [the tabernacle itself]

5. ADDITIONAL RABBINIC CATEGORIES

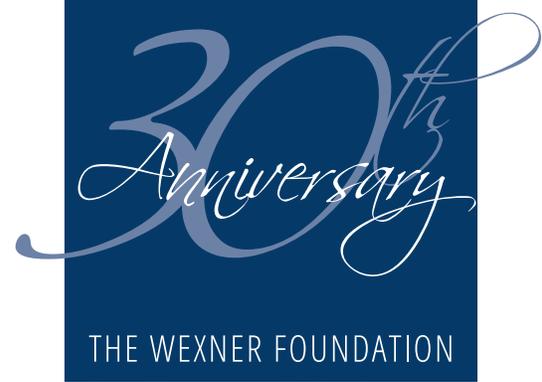
Resting

muktseh [items banned because they were not prepared prior to Shabbat]
mimtso chefts'kha [seeking your normal wants]
daber davar [discussing the forbidden]

Normal weekday activities that detract from holy ambiance of the day
e.g., tirschah [activities that require undue strain]

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C. RABBINIC LIMITS IN TRANSITION: SALONIKA IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

6. POPULATION ESTIMATES DATA (BASED ON ESTIMATES OF FOREIGN CONSULS)

DATE	POPULATION	JEWS
1653	60,000	30,000
1741	80,000	40,000
1768	70,000	27,000 ("BANKERS, MERCHANTS, ARTISANS")
1796	60,000	12,000

7. EVENTS AND RABBIS

1603-1673: Chaim ben Israel Benvenista
1666: End of Shabbatai Zevi's career
1699: Carlowitz peace treaty with Austria

1722-1781: Solomon Molcho
1718: Passarowitz peace treaty with Russia
1763: Great drought
1769: First edition of Solomon Molcho's Orchoth Yosher
1781: "Great fire"

8. LETTER FROM 1658 BY CHAIM BEN ISRAEL BENVENISTA

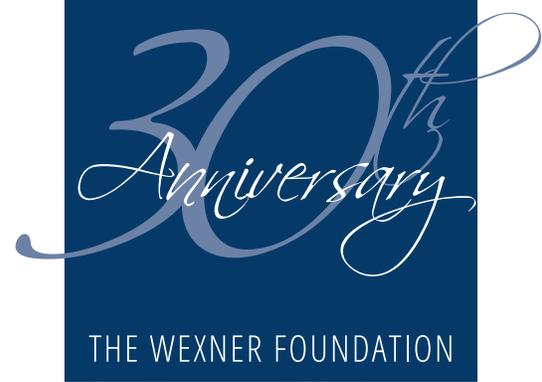
In our city, there exists a bitter and evil custom, namely, people attend coffee houses [kaviani] and drink coffee that has been prepared on the Sabbath for the express needs of the Jews. There can be no doubt that non-Jews do this work for the Jews, since were it not for the Jews who attend, the owners of the coffee-houses would not prepare half of what, in fact, they make. Sometimes, the non-Jew even says expressly to a Jewish patron that he has made the coffee just for him. . . .As long as such a person says that he makes it for the Jew's sake, even if he really does not do so, it is forbidden. But this custom has taken root almost everywhere. . . . You cannot find a soul – neither man, woman nor child, including even the majority of students of Torah – who does not drink coffee made by non-Jews on Shabbat. The exceptions are so few that a child could write them down and they would not amount to more than ten people.

9. BENVENISTA, AFTER A SERMON ON THE SUBJECT

A very few select individuals, whose heart God touched, listened to me, so that from that day onward, they stopped drinking coffee on Shabbat, unless it had been prepared in a house where they had placed it in a stove before Shabbat began. But most people still remained confirmed in their old bad habit, the upper classes of society chief among them.

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10. FROM SOLOMON MOLCHO'S ORCHOT YOSHER

What is especially evil in these difficult times, full of distress and sorrow, is that we do not pray properly, we try to satisfy our souls with bread, and people bring trefe food into their homes. At least we might serve God properly.

- people get dressed, come to synagogue to celebrate but then forget about the prayer service completely
- they do not respond correctly with "Amen" because they are not listening
- when wealthy people are refused an aliyah, they get angry and disrupt services
- men go about clean-shaven
- merchants get up early enough to go to work and make money but won't do the same regarding worship services, which they skip. "The evil inclination prompts them to say, "Pray now or pray later; it's all the same." They imitate the ways of their gentile neighbors who "would run to do the work of the gods of silver and of gold even if it meant taking deadly poison."
- they attend kaviani on Shabbat

11. MOLCHO ON THE DROUGHT OF 1763

We [the rabbis] ordained a fast, prayers of atonement, and cessation from work. But our prayers were not answered. We therefore made inquiries regarding the affairs of the city and discovered that people were attending coffee-houses on the holy Sabbath day. We forbade them to go and they listened to us... although some of the wealthy class in town make their coffee on Friday and then on the holy Sabbath day they have their non-Jewish servants warm it up for them.

12. MOLCHO ON THE KAVIANI IN 1769 [WHEN HIS BOOK WAS PUBLISHED]

This plague has spread, whereby many of the masses attend coffee houses on the holy Sabbath day, and there they drink those bitter accursed waters that have most certainly been heated expressly for them. . . . It was bad enough when they drank coffee that they found already prepared for them [and they could pretend that it had not been made expressly for them] But now they actually sit there ordering it, so that with absolute certainty it is made just for them. They even have reserved places in the kaviani in which they sit Sabbath after Sabbath.

D. TRUTHS: REFORM JUDAISM IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY

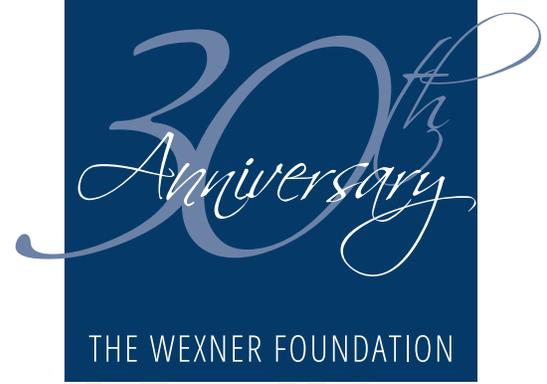
13. 1846 BRESLAU CONFERENCE

We must return to the biblical idea of the Sabbath, which, as is the case with divine truth in general, has eternal validity.... We must, then, reemphasize the biblical idea, that the Sabbath is a day of consecration which is sanctified through our sanctifying ourselves; a day the distinctiveness of which is brought forcibly home to us by our ceasing our daily toil and our daily tasks, and giving ourselves to contemplation of the divine purpose of our existence as indicated by Jewish teaching. Hence, no task should be forbidden which conduces toward recreation and spiritual elevation.

14. GUNTHER PLAUT DESCRIBING KAUFMAN KOHLER'S RESEARCH ON SHABBAT'S ORIGINS (1917)

[Kohler asked] whether the Hebrew Sabbath was from the beginning based on the fixed institution of the week, which certainly rests on Babylonian astrology, or whether it originally corresponded with the four lunar phases, so that the 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th of each month were the days of the moon's standstill, that is, Sabbath days. He was anxious to prove that Israel's Sabbath was not a derivative of the Babylonian Shabbatu. Kohler spoke as a child of 19th-century idealism. To him, as to the early reformers, the original ideas of the Sabbath, the origins of the day, were more important than what Israel had done with it over the centuries.

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E. MODERNITY AND MEANING

