

A SAMPLING OF CUSTOMS THAT SURROUND קבלת שבת

קבלת שבת Before שיר השירים Reciting

The practice of reciting שיר השירים before קבלת שבת is not found in early סידורים. It appears to be among the innovations that were introduced by the generation of the אר"י. The סידור אוצר תפילות points to the following excerpt from the זוהר as the source for the practice:

ספר שמות-פרשת תרומה-Rabbi Jose thereupon began to speak on the words: *The song of songs, which is Solomon's* (S.S.I, 1). Said he: "This song King Solomon poured forth when the Temple was erected and all the worlds, above and below, had reached their perfect consummation. And although concerning the exact time of its singing there is some difference of opinion among the members of the Fellowship, we may be certain that it was not sung until that time of absolute completion, when the Moon-the Shekinah-came to her fullness and was revealed in the full perfection of her radiance, and when the Temple had been erected in the likeness of the Temple that is above. The Holy One, blessed be He, then experienced such joy as He had not known since the creation of the world. When Moses set up the Tabernacle in the wilderness, another such was raised in the heavenly spheres, as we learn from the words: "And it came to pass... that *the* Tabernacle was reared up", the reference being to the other Tabernacle, to that which was above, namely the Tabernacle of the "Young Man", Metatron, and nothing greater. But when the first Temple was completed another Temple was erected at the same time, which was the centre for all the worlds, shedding radiance upon all things and giving light to all the spheres. Then the world was firmly established, and all the supernal casements were opened to pour forth light, and all the worlds experienced such joy as had never been known to them before, and celestial and terrestrial beings alike broke forth in song. And the song which they sang is the "Song of Songs", or, as we might render, "Song of the Singers", of those musicians who chant to the Holy One, blessed be He. King David sang "A song of degrees": King Solomon sang "the Song of Songs". Now what is the difference between the two? Do we not interpret both titles to signify one and the same thing? Verily, this is so, for both things are certainly one, but in the days of David all the singers of the spheres were not yet set in their rightful places to chant the praises of their King, because the Temple was not as yet in existence. For, as on earth, the Levitic singers are divided into groups, so is it likewise above, and the upper correspond to the lower. But not before the Temple was erected did they assume these their due places, and the lamp which before gave no light began then to shed radiance abroad, and then this song was sung to the glory of the Supernal King, the "King to whom peace belongs". This song is superior to all the hymns of praise which had ever been sung before. The day on which this hymn was revealed on earth was perfect in all things, and therefore the song is holy of holies. It is written in the Book of Adam that on the day when the Temple would be erected the Patriarchs would awaken song both above and below. Not that they would sing themselves, but they would rouse to song those mighty singers who preside over all worlds. On that day, it is said, Jacob the "perfect" one

arose and entered the Garden of Eden and caused it also to sing, and all the spices of the Garden likewise. He, therefore, it is who gave utterance to the song, since but for him the Garden would not have sung. This song comprises the whole Torah: it is a song in which those who are above and those who are below participate; a song formed in the likeness of the world above, which is the supernal Sabbath, a song through which the supernal Holy Name is crowned. Therefore it is holy of holies. Why so? Because all its words are instinct with love and joy. This is because the “cup of blessing” was then given with the Right Hand; and when this is so all is joy and love; therefore all the words of the Song of Songs are perfected with love and with joy. When the Right Hand was drawn back, (at the destruction of the Temple (Lam. II, 3), the “cup of blessing” was placed in the Left Hand, and therefore those who were above and those who were below broke out in lamentation, saying: “Where is the ‘cup of blessing’ of the supernal place which was wont to abide therein? It has been withdrawn and withheld from you”. Hence the Song of Songs, which emanated from the Right Side, is full of love and joy in all its words, but the Book of Lamentation, which marks the withdrawal of the Right Hand and the emergence of the Left, is full of complaint and lamentation. It may be asked, does not all joy and singing emanate from the Left Side, since the Levites who were the singers were from that side? The answer is that all joy which issues from the Left Side is due to the union of the Left with the Right. When the Right Hand combines with the Left, then the joy which belongs to the Right mitigates the turbulence of the Left, and is infused into the Left. But when the Right Hand is not active, the wrathfulness of the Left increases, and there is no joy. Then the cry rises “*Ey kal*”: “what will become of the ‘Cup of Blessing’?” It is retained in the Left Hand and the anger is hot and does not cool. No wonder, then, that there is lamentation and mourning. But the Song of Songs represents the “Cup of Blessing” when tendered by the Right Hand, and therefore all love and joy is found therein, as in no other song in the world. Therefore was this song aroused from the side of the Patriarchs. ‘On the day when this song was revealed the Shekinah descended to earth, as it is written, “And the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud.” Why? Because “the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord” (I Kings VIII, 11), On that day this hymn was revealed, and Solomon sang in the power of the Holy Spirit this song wherein is to be found the summary of the whole Torah, of the whole work of Creation, of the mystery of the Patriarchs, of the story of the Egyptian exile, and the Exodus therefrom, and of the Song of the Sea. It is the quintessence of the Decalogue, of the Sinaitic covenant, of the significance of Israel's wanderings through the desert, until their arrival in the Promised Land and the building of the Temple. It contains the crowning of the Holy Name with love and joy, the prophecy of Israel's exile among the nations, of their redemption, of the resurrection of the dead, and of all else until that Day which is “Sabbath to the Lord”. All that was, is, and shall be, is contained in it; and, indeed, even that which will take place on the “Seventh Day”, which will be the “Lord's Sabbath”, is indicated in this song. Therefore we are taught that he who recites a verse from the Song of Songs as a mere drinking song causes the Torah to dress in sackcloth and to complain before the Holy One, blessed be He: “Your children have turned me into an amusement for a drinking bout.” Yes, assuredly the Torah says this. Therefore it behooves the faithful to be wary, and to guard every word of the Song of Songs like a crown upon their heads. It may be asked, why, then, is the Song of Songs placed among the Hagiographa (which are not so sacred as the other two parts of Scripture)? The answer is, because it is the Hymn of Praise sung by the Community of

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Israel at the time when she is crowned above. Therefore no other hymn is so pleasing to the Holy One as this. (Davka Soncino Classics).

Clearly, the purpose in reciting **שיר השירים** before **קבלת שבת** was to hasten the coming of the **יום שכולו שבת**, the ultimate redemption. Some **סידורים** provide for the recital of four verses from **שיר השירים** for those who did not have an opportunity to recite the complete **שיר השירים**. The first letters of each verse taken together spell out: **יעקב**. From the above excerpt it is clear why the name of **יעקב** was chosen.

The Practice Of Wearing A טלית For קבלת שבת

Some Yemenite Jews follow the practice of wearing a טלית for **קבלת שבת**:

התכלאל המבואר (page 164) – המנהג בתימן בערב שבת היה להתפלל מנחה גדולה, ואחר כך יצאו לבתייהם בעוד היום גדול, כדי להחליף בגדיהם בבגדי שבת. ובבתי הכנסיות הגדולים הקדימו לפני מנחה ללמוד בזוהר הקדוש כשעה אחת, במקהלה ובקול רם (והיו מתאספים לשם רבים משאר בתי כנסיות). כשעה אחת לפני שקיעת החמה חזרו ובאו לבתי הכנסת כשהם מעוטפים בציצית³, קראו את מגילת שיר השירים, אמרו סדר קבלת שבת לכו נרננה וכו', והתפללו ערבית של שבת מבעוד יום. אולם כיום בארץ ישראל נשתנה הסדר. כשעה לפני שבת מתאספים הציבור בבית הכנסת, מתעפטים בציצית, וקוראים את מגילת שיר השירים, ורק אחר כך מתפללים מנחה.

Translation: On Fridays, it was the custom in Yemen to recite Mincha at its earliest time. They would return home while the day was still long in order to change into Shabbos clothes. In the large synagogues, they would study the Zohar before Mincha for at least one hour, in unison and out loud (gathered there were many people from other synagogues). About an hour before sunset, they would return to synagogue wearing their Taleisim. They would read the Megila of Shir Ha'Shirim. They would then recite the order of prayers that constitute Kabbalas Shabbos beginning with Lechu Niranina etc. and they would recite

1. ישקני מנשיקות פיהו כי טובים הדיך מינין:
עורי צפון ובואי תימן הפיחי גני יזלו בשמיני יבא דודי יגנו ויאכל פרי מגדיו:
קול דודי הגה זה בא מדלג על ההרים מקפץ על הגבעות:
באתי לגני אהתי בלה אריתי מורי עם בשמי אכלתי יערי עם דבשי שתיתי ייני עם חלבי אכלו רעים שתו ושכרו דודים:
2. This practice should not be surprising. Keep in mind that Ashkenazic Jews wear a Talis for Maariv on Yom Kippur.
3. שו"ת רדב"ז חלק ד סימן רמד – וכבר ראיתי מי שהפליג על המדה וכתב שאסור לצאת בליל שבת במלית אפילו מצויצת כהלכתה דלילה לאו זמן ציצית הוא. ואני מן המתירין דאע"ג דלילה לאו זמן ציצית הוא מכל מקום מלבוש הוא לכל בר ישראל כיון שהיא מצויצת כהלכתה וברור הוא.

Translation: I read an opinion that differed with my opinion and held that it was prohibited to walk out wearing a Talis on Shabbos night even if the talis had proper tzitzis because the night was not the appropriate time to wear tzitzis. I am among those who permit that activity. Although the night is not the appropriate time to wear tzitzis, a talis is an article of clothing that is appropriate for a Jew to wear provided that it has proper tzitzis. It is clear to me.

Rabbi David ben Solomon ibn Avi Zimra, born in Spain in 1479 and died in Israel in 1573. He left Spain in 1492, as a result of the Spanish expulsion of the Jews. He emigrated to Safed. In 1513, he left Israel for Cairo, where he became head of the local Jewish community, chief rabbi, head of the rabbinic court and yeshiva. (Bar Ilan Digital Library)

Maariv while it was still day. Currently, in Israel, the order of the service has been modified. The congregation gathers about an hour before Shabbos, don their Taleisim, read the Megilah of Shir Ha'Shirim and only then do they recite Tefilas Mincha.

The source for the practice may be the following excerpt from the גמרא:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף קי"ט ע"מ א'—רבי חנינא מיעטף וקאי אפניא דמעלי שבתא,
אמר: בואו ונצא לקראת שבת המלכה. רבי ינאי לביש מאניה מעלי שבת, ואמר: בואי כלה
בואי כלה.

Translation: Rav Hanina robed himself and stood at sunset of Sabbath eve and exclaimed, 'Come and let us go forth to welcome the queen Sabbath.' Rav Jannai donned his robes, on Sabbath eve and exclaimed, 'Come, O bride, Come, O bride!'

קבלת שבת The Order Of The Prayers Within

The תכלאל המבואר on page 176 presents the following note:

התכלאל המבואר—יש מקומות שבכדי לתת שהות למאחרים להגיע ולהתפלל תפלת מנחה עם הציבור, נהגו עם סיום שיר השירים, להסמיך אמירת המזמורים המתחילים במזמור לכו נרננה וכו' עד כי קדוש ה' א—להינו (סוף מזמור ה' מלך ירגזו עמים), ורק אחר כך מתפללים מנחה, ולאחר קדיש תתקבל אומרים מזמור לדוד הבו לה' בני א—לים וכו' וכל הסדר שאחריו.

Translation: In order to give individuals who are running late an opportunity to recite Tefilas Mincha with the congregation, some synagogues follow the following practice: after completing Shir Ha'Shirim, they recite the chapters of Tehillim that are part of Kabbalas Shabbos beginning with Lechu Niranina until Ki Kadosh Hashem Elokeinu (end of Mizmor Hashem Melech Yirgizu Amim) and only then do they recite Tefilas Mincha. After Kaddish Tiskabel, they recite Mizmor L'David Havu Lashem Binei Eilim etc. and the order of prayers that follow.

לכה דודי אבל After Greeting An

The practice of greeting an אבל after reciting לכה דודי is not found in ancient סידורים.

Even today, the practice is not found in Sephardic סידורים nor in נוסח ספרד. The era when the practice began is difficult to pinpoint. It may be an Ashkenazic custom that only began in the 1800's. The סידור עבודת ישראל, compiled in the 1800's by Rabbi Zeligman Baer, זצ"ל, in Germany, contains the following note:

סידור עבודת ישראל—כשיש אבל עומד בחצר בית הכנסת. החשוב שבקהל יוצא לקראתו ומכניסו לבית הכנסת קודם שמתחילים ברכו (ויש קהלות קודם שאומרים בואי בשלום) ואומרים לו: המקום ינחמך עם שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים.

Translation: When a mourner stands in the entrance of the synagogue, one of the important members of the congregation goes out to him and accompanies him into the synagogue before the congregation recites Barchu

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(there are some congregations who do this before reciting Bo'ee B'Shalom). Those present address the mourner in this manner: May G-d comfort you together with the others who mourn Zion and Jerusalem.

The book: ספר מנהגי אמסטרדם contains the following note:

ספר מנהגי אמסטרדם-פרק ב'-מנהגי שבת-סעיף ב'-קבלת שבת-ט) אבל תוך שבעה מכניסים בליל שבת סמוך לברכו מעזרה דבית הכנסת באומרם מה שאומרים לאבל. יא) הכנסה זו תיעשה על ידי חזן ושמש. ועכשיו, על ידי אלה שנקבעו לכך.

Translation: 9) A mourner during his first seven days of mourning is brought into synagogue on Friday night from the inner entrance of the synagogue just before the congregation recites Barchu and the congregation greets him by saying the words they are required to say. 11) This bringing in should be done by the head of the synagogue or the Shamas. Now it is done by the ones who have been chosen to perform this task.

Yehudah Brillman, the editor of the recent edition of ספר מנהגי אמסטרדם, points to the following as the source for the practice:

מחזור ויטרי סימן רעה-ואני יצחק בר' דורבלו ראיתי ברמרו דאתרייע ביה מילתא בר' יוסף בנו של רבינו יעקב בן רבנא מאיר מבנו. ואחר שהתפללו מנחה בערב שבת בבית הכנסת ישב לו ר' שלמה אחי רבינו שהיה מתפלל. ואמר לו רבינו יעקב אחיו לך להביא יוסף בני לבית הכנסת. שלה עמו החבר ר' יצחק בן רבינו שמואל ואחרים עמו. כיון שבא לבית הכנסת ירד הרב ר' שלמה לפני הארון ואמר ברכו: תמהתי מה טעם איחרו להביאו עד אחר המנחה כי ראיתי במלכות ברנויינא שנהגו להוליך האבל לבית הכנסת משעה שהציבור הולכין. עד שנודע לי טעמו של דבר שלא אמרו רבותינו באבל מקצת היום בטלו אלא ביום ראשון שמתחיל אבילות וביום אחרון בלבד. אבל בשאר ימים לא. שאם לא תאמר כן. ישב בכל ז' ימי אבלו מקצת היום בבקר ואחר יעשה צרכיו וילך חוץ לביתו אלא ודאי לא אמרו מקצת היום ככולו אלא בראשון ואחרון בלבד:

Translation: I, Isaac son of Dorbelo witnessed an incident involving Rabbi Yosef son of Rabbi Yaakov. After the congregation completed the recital of Tefilas Mincha on Erev Shabbos, Rabbi Shlomo brother of Rav Yaakov who had been praying, sat down. Rabbi Yaakov, his brother, said to him: go and bring Yosef my son into the synagogue. Rabbi Shlomo sent the Chaver Reb Yitzchok son of Rabbi Shmuel and others with him. When Yosef entered the synagogue, Rabbi Shlomo went down from his seat, went to the Oron and said Barchu. I was surprised that they delayed the services to bring the mourner into synagogue only after the congregation completed Tefilas Mincha. I had seen in the country of Bargonia that their practice was to bring the mourner in for Tefilas Mincha at the same time that the others entered for Mincha. My concerns about the practice were alleviated when I learned the reason for Rabbi Shlomo's practice. Concerning mourning there is a rule that part of a day is equal to the full day. That rule is only applicable to the first day when the mourning period begins and last day when the period of mourning ends. The rule is not applied to the other days. If that were not the case, then on each of the seven days the mourner would sit for part of the day and then go about his business outside of his house during the latter part of the day. To eliminate the possibility of that kind of conduct, they applied the rule only to the first and last days of mourning.

Rabbi Shlomo Zvi Shick (1800's), who wrote: *ספר תקנות ותפילות* explains the purpose of the custom to greet mourners after reciting *לכה דודי* as follows:

ספר תקנות ותפילות—שער ה'—שער תקנת משה—קבלה בידינו מאנשי כנסת הגדולה שעל ג' עמודים העולם עומד, א', על התורה דכתיב (ירמיה ל"ג) אם לא בראתי יומם ולילה חקות שמים וארץ לא שמת, ב', על העבודה זו עבודת קרבנות, שמצינו שהקריב נח הקרבנות נשבע הקב"ה שלא יביא מבול לעולם, ובזמן שאין בית המקדש קיים סדר הקרבנות והתפלה הם במקום קרבן (רמב"ם פ"א מתפלה), ג', ועל גמילות חסדים דכתיב עולם חסד יבנה (תהילים פ"ט), והוא לשמח חתן וכלה, לנחם אבלים, לבקר חולים לקבור מתים, ולהלביש ערומים ולהאכיל רעבים ולהשקות הצמאים.

Translation: We learned from the men of the Great Assembly that the world stands on three foundations; first, the foundation of Torah as it is written (Yirmiyahu 33) had I not created days and nights, I would not have given the laws of heaven and earth. Second, on service; i.e. the service of the sacrifices. We find that Noah brought sacrifices because of which G-d swore that He would never again cause a flood to ravage the Earth. Once the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, the description of the sacrifices and prayers became a substitute for the sacrifices (Rambam, Hilchos Tefila, chapter 1). Third, on the merit of acts of kindness as it is written (Tehillim 89): kindness causes worlds to be built. Acts of kindness include rejoicing with a groom and bride, comforting mourners, visiting the sick, burying the dead, providing clothing to those who do not have clothing, feeding the hungry and quenching the thirst of the thirsty.

והנה מי שיש לו עין יפה ימצא כי מעת היתה ישראל לגוי עשו כל השתדלות לתקן תקנות למען כל בני העיר יהיו עוסקים בציבור לקיים את שלשה עמודי עולם במקום אחד. ונחזי משה רבינו היה הראשון שתיקן שיהיו קורין בתורה בציבור בשבת וביום טוב ולא יהיה ג' ימים בלא תורה... היוצא מדבריהם שמשה רבינו תקן להקהיל העדה בשבת וביום טוב כדי שילמדו תורה בציבור למען ידעו מה טוב ומה ה' דורש מאתנו, והכל כדי לחזק את עמוד התורה; בעת שבית המקדש קיים היה קרבנות ציבור וקרבנות יחיד ובו שרו הלויים שירות ותשבחות והציבור והיחיד הביאו תודה על קרבן המזבח לרצון לפי ה', ובעת שנחרב בית המקדש ראו אנשי כנסת הגדולה שעמוד העבודה נתמוטט וינעו אמות הסיפים, לזאת עמדו ותיקנו תפלה בציבור, ויען כי בששת ימי המעשה זה פונה לזיתו וזה לכרמו תיקנו שיהיה בכל עיר עשרה בטלנים (ב"ק פ"ב עיי"ש ברש"י) למען יתקדש שם שמים בציבור בכל יום ויום, ולמען יתקיים עמוד העבודה בציבור תיקנו עשרה בטלנים; ולמען חזק את עמוד גמילות חסדים בכל הענפים בציבור תיקנו אנשי כנסת הגדול לנדור בבית הכנסת בעת קריאת התורה בין גברא לגברא לדברים טובים שהם בכלל גמילות חסדים... ובמה שנודר לצדקה בזה מפרנסין עניים, מאכילין הרעבים ומלבישין ערומים וכדומה, ובזה רצו לחזק ולהקים את עמוד גמילת חסדים בציבור.

Translation: Anyone who has a keen eye can discern that from the time the Jewish people became a nation, their religious leaders strove to institute practices that would cause the general population to perform acts in one place (i.e. the synagogue) that involved the three foundations of Judaism. We find that Moshe Rabbenu

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was the first to institute the practice of reading the Torah in a group of ten or more men on Shabbos and on holidays and the rule that not more than three days should pass without hearing the Torah being read . . . From their words we can conclude that Moshe Rabbenu instituted the practice of reading the Torah in a group of ten or more men on Shabbos and on holidays in order to cause the study Torah in public so that those congregated would learn what was good and what G-d had demanded of us. All of this was done in order to strengthen the foundation of Torah. When the Beis Hamikdash stood, communal sacrifices were brought and so were individual sacrifices. The Leviim sang there songs of praise. The community and individuals brought sacrifices of thanks in accordance with the words of G-d. Once the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, the foundation of service became weak. In order to strengthen the foundation of service, our Sages instituted the practice of praying in a group of ten or more men. Since during the work week, some were busy with their fields and some were busy with their orchards, they instituted the practice that in each community ten men were designated to be present in synagogue at all times in order that G-d's name would be sanctified in public each day and so that the foundation of service would be strengthened each day. In order to strengthen the foundation of acts of kindness they instituted the practice that each person who was called to the torah donated money for good deeds. That practice was part of what constituted acts of kindness . . . From what was donated, the poor received help. The community could feed the hungry, clothe those who had no clothes and similar acts. By doing so they strengthened the foundation of acts of kindness.

ויען כי בכלל עמוד גמילת הסדים הוא לשמה התן וכלה ולנחם אבלים, לזאת רצו לתקנו בשלימות בציבור, ומה עשו אנשי כנסת הגדולה? התקינו שיהיו חתנים ואבלים הולכים לבית הכנסת, ואנשי המקום רואים בבית הכנסת את החתן ושמחים עמו, ורואים את האבל ומתאבלים עמו ויצאו ישראל לידי חובתן בגמילת הסדים, עד כאן לשונו. מפרש בברייתא שתכלית תקנתם היה לחזק עמוד גמילת הסדים בציבור. ובוה נודע לנו שמה שנוהגין עוד היום להפך פניהם בבית הכנסת בעת שאומרים באי בשלום היינו קודם קבלת שבת, ומה טעם יש בוזה? מראש אמרתי שהמנהג בא יען שמצינו בש"ס שבת קי"ט והובא בטור או"ח ס' רס"ב שר"ח מעטיף בטליתו וקאי בפניא דמעלי שבתא ואומר בואו ונצא לקראת שבת מלכתא, ר"י אמר באי כלה באי כלה עיי"ש,

Translation: Since rejoicing with a groom and bride and comforting mourners are part of the foundation of kind acts, our Sages wished to incorporate such acts into our communal activities. What did the Men of Great Assembly institute? They began a practice of having grooms and brides and mourners come to synagogue. Those congregated would then see the groom and rejoice with him. They would see the mourner and comfort him. By doing so the Jewish people fulfilled part of their obligation to perform kind acts. We can conclude from the Baraisa that the purpose of instituting the practice was to strengthen the foundation of kind acts in a public forum. From that we can learn the reason for our practice of turning around in synagogue when we recite Bo'Ve B'Shalom just before Kabbalas Shabbos. What reason could there be for such an act? At first I believed that we performed that act based on the Gemara, Maseches Shabbos 119 brought in the Tur Orach Chaim Siman 262 that Rav Chanina wrapped himself in his Talis and went to greet the Shabbos and said: Bo'Oo V'Naitzai Likras Shabbos Malchisa. Rav Yosse said: Bo'Ee Kallah, Bo'Ee Kallah.

אך כפי הברייתא הנ"ל מבורר שמנהג הפכת פנים הוא מנהג ישן נושן כדי לראות אם עומדים במקום המיוחד לאבלים אבלים ובמקום המיוחד לחתנים חתנים, למען ידעו את מי

לנתח ועם מי לשמוח ביום השבת כדי לקיים מצות גמילת חסדים. ומזה בא שנהגו לקרות קודם קבלת שבת לקראת אבל ואחר קבלת שבת כשיש ברית מילה בעיר במשך השבוע הבאה קורא השמש דבית הכנסת: זכר, למען ידעו אלו שאינם רגילים לבוא לבית הכנסת בששת ימי המעשה שיש בעיר אבל לנחמו ושיזכרו לבוא לברית ביום המילה לקיים מצות גמילת חסד בציבור, יען דאם יש אבל עני בעיר ואין לו מה לאכל ועושה מלאכה כדי לאכל אמרו תבא מארה לשכניו שהצריכו לו לכך, לכן צריכין בני העיר לידע מי הם האבלים כדי לנתח אותם וגם לפרנסם כשצריכין לכך.

However, from the aforementioned Baraisa it appeared that it was an ancient practice to turn around to see if in the place set aside for mourners, mourners were present and if in the place designated for grooms, grooms were present, in order that those congregated could know who to comfort and with whom to rejoice on Shabbos in order to fulfill the mitzvah of performing kind acts. From this developed the practice to call out before Kabbalas Shabbos: towards the mourners and after Kabbalas Shabbos if a Bris was to take place in the city within the following week, the Shamas would call out: remember, so that those who did not come to shul during the week would know that a mourner was present in the city and that it was necessary to comfort him and they would know that a boy was born and that they should come to the Bris on the day of the Bris in order to fulfill the obligation for the community to be involved in performing acts of kindness. If there was a mourner who was poor in the city and who generally did not have what to eat and was required to perform day work in order to support himself, (bad things will happen to such a community where poor people have to resort to such activity), the members of the community needed to know so that they could comfort them and provide them support when they needed it.

The custom of announcing the birth of a boy during קבלת שבת (just before ברכו) is still practiced according to the current סדור בני רומי (Roman Rite). The following is announced:

משכיל מכתם שירו רעים, לכבוד איש תם ותמים דעים,
גם אמרו מה טוב ומה נעים, ילד הנימול לשמונה,
אשיר היום לברית מילה, זמרה שגיון ותהלה,
תודות אקריב כדמות עולה, וכמו תורים ובני יונה.

Translation:

*My friends, sing a song in honor of the simple man with the pure mind,
Say how wonderful and good is this boy who will be circumcised on the eighth day;
I will sing today in anticipation of the circumcision; songs, hymns and words of praise;
Sacrifices of thanksgiving I will bring forth in the form of a burnt offering, with turtle doves and doves.*