Shabbat: No Jewish Family Went Hungry

The Sabbath required one to make special preparation. Not infrequently, this was extremely onerous for the poor Jew lacking the necessary ruble on the eve of the Sabbath. Even with a single ruble it was possible to "make the Sabbath" for a household. On Friday evening and the Sabbath day, meat was usually eaten. All week long one settled for "almost anything" but it would not do to "disgrace" the Sabbath.

The contrast between dishes served on weekdays and those for the Sabbath was striking. For the Sabbath, all sorts of good things were prepared. One might explain this phenomenon as being a way to compensate the half-starved body, which needed the nourishing food it had not tasted all week. But it was really done to honor the Sabbath Queen. The Sabbath was no small matter. It seemed that not only were these small-town and village Jews observing the Sabbath, but that all of nature was in tune with the Sabbath. And since that was the case, how could one greet so important a guest as the Holy Sabbath with only *borscht* or barley soup? That would be a profanation.

Even in the poorest of homes a small *hallah* would be baked. Woe to the family that did not even have ten or fifteen kopeks needed to buy flour and yeast! For such a family, the community would have to step in. The family might do without food during the week; this was scarcely a novelty, and did not particularly move the neighbors. They could not, however, permit a Jewish family to go hungry on the Sabbath. It may be assumed, then, that in every Jewish home there was some sort of *hallah* on the Sabbath. Yet the Sabbath is still no Sabbath unless there is a piece of fish, or some meat, or both.

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