

# Shabbat Shalom

## The Creator's Gift to Weary Man

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### THE BLESSING OF THE SABBATH

#### The Joy of the Sabbath

FOR YEARS I CLIMBED MOUNTAINS, the glaciated peak type. We have many such snow-covered dormant volcanoes within several hours of my home, and it was my goal as a youth to climb them all within a two-state area. In fact, the old farm home I was raised in was built by my grandfather, himself a pioneer mountain guide, and was situated in such a way on a hill affording the house an unimpeded view of Mount Hood, Oregon's loftiest peak. I grew up looking at our beloved mountain everyday. As a child I learned to ski, hike and backpack on that mountain. I dreamed of the day when I would be old enough to climb it.

That day finally arrived. By then I was in my teens. We started early in the morning under a full moon. I could see the summit of that mountain off in the distance—way up there. The alpine sky was so clear that it seemed I could reach right out and touch the top. Yet I knew that a long and wearisome journey up through pumice, snow and glacial ice awaited. Many people are hurt or even killed making this climb. Would I make it?

The climb was easy at first. Then the terrain got steeper and the wind got stronger and the air colder as we climbed higher and higher. Pretty soon the place from which we started became a speck in the distance while the summit of the mountain was growing larger as we were getting closer to the top. But we still had a long way to go.

The hours passed by. The terrain got steeper. The backpack, climbing gear and boots got heavier. My body cried out for thirst as the day wore on. I had to conserve my water to make it last all day. Once it was gone there was no more water. The muscles began to ache as we trudged onward and upward mile after mile—the summit gradually, but oh so slowly, getting closer and larger. But the most difficult, steepest and most dangerous part of the climb was yet to come—up the Hog's Back in the volcano's caldera, over the bergshrund and around the crevasses and then up the Chute, which was a rocky defile leading to the summit and a magnet for falling rocks and avalanches. It was one step at time, hour after long and tiring hour. One had to endure thirst, muscle and mental fatigue to reach the summit.

After climbing my first mountain, and then many more after that, while wiling away the hours putting one foot in front of another to scale a peak, I had much time to philosophize. To me mountain climbing was a microcosm of life. Any goal worth attaining required much effort to get there. Once on top of that mountain the climb was worth it. The feeling of exhilaration, freedom and the panorama made it all worth it. Like a mother who gives birth to a child, once that child is born she soon forgets the pain of the labor once she is cradling her newborn child in her arms.

Such is the case each week when enduring the rigors of the week in hopes of reaching the Sabbath at week's end. Whether it is climbing a mountain, giving birth to a child, running a race, or setting any goal and then achieving it through time and effort, one is drawn onward by the glorious prospects of reaching that goal. Once that goal is achieved, the totality of one's being cries out with a sigh of relief and exaltation at having finally arrived. Unspeakable joy and peace flood one's innermost being at a job well-done and a prized goal having been achieved.

As we proceed in this study, hopefully the reader will discover that one can develop this same heart and spirit for the Sabbath. It can and should be viewed as the focal point of each person's week, the goal to be achieved, the mark to hit, or the race to win. When the race is completed there is both a feeling of relief and triumph at the same time. The work week ending in the weekly Sabbath is the culmination, the crowning achievement of a week of toil, sweat, and frustration. It is the peak of the mountain. From this vantage point, one can see not only into the past—looking back over the six-day week as well as over the past 6000 years stretching back to the original

creation and the first Sabbath, but one can also look forward to the seventh millennia, that time when the earth will be in perfect rest under the rulership of the Messiah of Israel. The Sabbath is therefore a weekly connection with our roots, who we are as humans, where we have come from and who made us. It is also our connection to the future and the world to come—the future Garden of Eden and paradise on earth called the Messianic Age or Millennium. The Sabbath in its fullest understanding is about going “back to the future.”

Additional blessings and spiritual perspective are to be found in the Sabbath. The two most prominent Bible passages where the Creator commands Sabbath observance are in the two scriptures where the Ten Commandments are listed: Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. In the former passage, after giving the basic command to rest on the Sabbath day, YHVH connects the Sabbath to the creation when he says, “For in six days, YHVH made the heavens and the earth...and rested on the seventh day” (Exod 20:9). By contrast, in the latter passage, after giving the Sabbath command, YHVH connects the Sabbath to deliverance from slavery in Egypt when he says, “And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and YHVH your Elohim brought you out from there by a mighty hand...” (Deut 5:15). What is interesting to note is that in Exodus YHVH reveals himself as our Creator (and Father) and invites us to rest in our feeling of accomplishment (and to commune) with him from our works even as he has from his. In Deuteronomy, however, YHVH reveals himself as the Liberator or Emancipator of man from physical (and spiritual) slavery to the rudiments of this world that bind us. In this, he invites us to worship, love and appreciate him for what he has done in setting us free from that which binds us in chains to this earth. The Sabbath is a vehicle of escape, which allows us to transcend the earthly and points us toward the heavenly—toward eternal life in the presence of Elohim himself in the spiritual and millennial Eden coming soon from heaven and ultimately ending up in the New Jerusalem.

### **The Glue That Holds a Family and Spiritual Community Intact**

As a Jewish saying goes, even though the Jewish people have been keeping the Sabbath for thousands of years, it's not that the Jews have been keeping the Sabbath, but rather that the Sabbath has been keeping the Jews. As a weekly rallying point, the Sabbath acts a spiritual glue that helps to hold the family and religious community together.

The joy, peace, timelessness and eternal nature of the Sabbath is felt no more than on *Erev Shabbat* (the eve of the Sabbath). Preparations in the home have been made all week for this family and community event. Expectations are high. It is as if a curtain suddenly drops between acts in a theater and the curtain lifts to reveal a completely new set and scene. “Suddenly, the frenzied pace of life is slowed; the concerns of the outside world recede; and all doubts and worries are set aside” (Witty, p. 153). It's a whole new world, a whole new feeling. Time stops. It is time to focus on those things which are of the greatest meaning in life and which are of enduring and eternal value: one's Creator, one's family, and spiritual orientation and instruction.

At this point, if the reader happens to own the movie *Fiddler On the Roof*, I suggest that you play the part at the beginning of the movie where the Jewish society prepares for the Sabbath and then ushers in the Sabbath over the Friday evening meal. After viewing this, one will have a better idea of the idea of the sanctity of the Sabbath and the central role it plays in the Hebrews' life. As one author notes, “A[n] ... important principle concerning the stability of the Jewish family is seen in the description of the Sabbath observance that is given in *Fiddler [on the Roof]*. In the small village of Anatevka in pre-Communist Russia, there is a sense of joyous anticipation as the Sabbath draws near (see Isa 58:13). The seventh day of the week is a dramatic symbol of community. It may be summed up in the word *holiness*. For Tevye and his family, holiness means an act of separation from many of the routine and mundane affairs of life. From the moment Golde, his wife, lights the Sabbath Eve candles until the first star appears in the sky some twenty-four hours later, there is a sense of wellbeing and spiritual satisfaction in the midst of their seething society. The Jewish community of Anatevka is in constant threat of another Russian pogrom. Yet we catch a snatch of this spiritual serenity as, around the Sabbath table, Tevye and Golde sing “A Sabbath Prayer” to all five daughters. The song concludes, ‘May YHVH protect and defend, may YHVH preserve you from pain. Favor them, O Lord, with happiness and peace. O hear our Sabbath prayer. Amein’” (Wilson, pp. 223–224).

The Sabbath has helped the observant Jew to refocus, sustain serenity and regain divine perspective in the midst of the weekly pressures of life, so ought “the Lord's Day [Sunday] for the Christian ought ... provide renewal in similar ways” (Wilson, pp. 223–224). Although a nice thought, the comparison between Sabbath and Sunday is without scriptural precedence or mandate. Such thinking ignores the divinely revealed truth and reality of

the Sabbath and its uniqueness and sanctity as compared to any other day of the week, including Sunday for the Christians—a day which never has been, nor ever will be sanctified by the Creator of the Universe as a day of rest from our work and a time for special communion with him, nor is it a replacement for the Sabbath.

### **“Shabbat Shalom”: There Is No Shalom Like It**

Yeshua talks about two kinds of peace (in Hebrew *shalom*): that of this world and that which he gives (John 14:27). Yeshua's peace is a special gift that originates neither from human sources nor through human effort. In the beginning YHVH sanctified the seventh day Sabbath; that is, he consecrated it and set it aside and apart from the other six days of the week for a special and unique purpose. He did this with no other day, the first day of the week included. The Sabbath has the Creator's seal upon it and with that comes his blessing (Exod 20:11). The uniqueness of the Sabbath is evidenced by the fact that it is the only day of the week to which the Bible attaches a name other than the sixth day of the week (or Friday), which is called the Preparation Day of the Sabbath (John 19:42).

The special place of prominence this day holds is reflected in the cheerful greeting on this day among Sabbath-keepers, which is “*Shabbat shalom!*” There is no word in the English language like the Hebrew word *shalom*, which means not just “peace,” but “total peace, well-being, joy and happiness in the fullest sense of the word: body, soul and spirit.” This is part of the blessing that those who bring their work week to a halt on Friday evening at the setting of the sun understand. There is a special peace and rest that settles into the deepest recesses of one's soul and spirit as one enters into the spiritual sanctuary of the Sabbath to commune with one's Creator and one's fellow man in a deep and spiritual kind of way. It is impossible for those who keep “Sabbath” on Sunday to experience this *shalom*. The blessing of this spiritual *shalom*, which YHVH placed on the seventh-day Sabbath isn't present on any other. Those who have been in both the Sunday and Sabbath worlds know this from first-hand experience and no more needs to be said. The well known phrase, “the proof is in the pudding” sums it up totally.

### **An Island Paradise of Peace in the Troubled Seas of Life—A Return to Eden**

As we launch into our study on the Sabbath, let's briefly explore some thoughts from the Jewish sages on this subject before delving into the biblical technicalities. The Jewish sages have given us some wonderful nuggets of wisdom and some deep insights on the Sabbath that are worth reviewing, and which will help to illuminate our thinking and open our perspective.

“The Sabbath embodies Judaism's model of sacred time—the restoration of that perfect moment of repose that [Elohim] sanctified in creating Eden.... By *Eden* Scripture means that place whole and at rest that [Elohim] sanctified; *Eden* stands for Creation in perfect repose ... a place in repose at the climax of Creation, at sunset at the start of the seventh day, whole and at rest, embodies, realized Eden” (Neusner, pp. 67-68).

In Deuteronomy 15:1-3 are instructions concerning the sabbatical year where the land is given a rest on the seventh year and all debts are forgiven. The sabbatical year is related to the seventh-day Sabbath, and so the same principles apply to both events. “So the [Set-Apart] Land is accorded a Sabbath, a restoration of the condition of Eden.... What links the sabbatical year to Eden's restoration? The reason is clear. The sabbatical year recovers that perfect time of Eden when the world was at rest, all things in place. Before the rebellion, man did not have to labor on the land; he picked and ate his meals freely. And, in the nature of things, everything belonged to everybody, private ownership in response to individual labor did not exist, because man did not have to work anyhow” (Neusner, p. 69).

Quoting *Yeshurshalmi Shebi'it*, 4a, Neusner continues, “On the Sabbath of creation, during the sabbatical year, and in the jubilee year, diverse aspects of Israelite life are to return to the way that they were at the time of creation. Israelites thus acknowledge that, in the beginning, [Elohim] created a perfect world, and they assure that the world of the here-and-now does not overly shift from its perfect character. By providing opportunity for Israelites to model their contemporary existence upon a perfected order of things, these commemorations further prepare the people for messianic times, when, under [Elohim's] rule, the world will permanently revert to the ideal character of the time of creation” (Neusner, p. 70). The creation account in Genesis records that all that [YHVH Elohim] made was *good* (Heb. *tov*). He created no evil. Evil was introduced into YHVH's good creation when man was tempted to commit the sin of pride and rebellion at the tree of knowledge. Paradise was lost at this time. Sabbath seeks to return to that time when man walked in perfect alignment with his Creator and with the created world where there was perfect rest and peace.

“The comparison of Eden and the land [of Israel], as well as Adam's entry into Eden and Israel's entry into the

[Promised] Land, is made explicit. The sabbatical year takes effect at the moment of Israel's entry into the land, counterpart of Adam's and Eve's entering Eden on the sixth day of creation." (Neusner, p. 70).

The writer of the Book of Hebrews makes this connection, as well, and then connects the Promised Land in Canaan to some future spiritual rest of which the physical Promised Land was but an antetype or prophetic foreshadow.

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. <sup>2</sup> For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. <sup>3</sup> For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest," although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. <sup>4</sup> For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And Elohim rested on the seventh day from all His works"; <sup>5</sup> and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest." <sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." <sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. <sup>9</sup> There remains therefore a rest for the people of Elohim. <sup>10</sup> For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as Elohim did from His. <sup>11</sup> Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. (Heb 4:1–11)

So for those with a full understanding of the historical and prophetic implications embodied in the Sabbath it is "back to the future" for them each time they celebrate the Sabbath.

Neusner continues, "The land [of Israel] in the seventh year compares with the Israelite household on the seventh day. The Israelite household at rest on the Sabbath day recapitulates the celebration of Elohim at the moment of the conclusion and perfection of creation. Then the Israelite household is sanctified: separated from the profane world and distinguished as [Elohim's] domain. With all things in place and in order, at the sunset that marks the advent of the seventh day, the rest that marks the perfection of creation descends. Like [Elohim] at the celebration of creation, now man achieves perfect, appropriate rest. That takes place when time, circumstance, but—as we shall see—demarcated space too, come together. The advent of the Sabbath marks the time; the household, the space, and the conduct of home and family life, the circumstance" (Neusner, p. 72).

### **A Time of Spiritual, Emotional and Physical Renewal**

"For the Jewish people, the Sabbath provides a regular opportunity to enjoy not only a physical rest from their daily labors, but also a renewal of their souls through prayer and Torah study. By sanctifying the Sabbath, Jews bring a spirit of holiness into their homes every week of the year" (Witty, p. 155).

"Physical exertion is not the criterion to be used to determine if an activity is permitted on the Sabbath or not. The blessing of physical rest can be appreciated by all of the us, rich and poor alike, who, in one way or another, are enslaved by the demands of our professional lives. The Sabbath comes to free us. It comes to soothe us, to calm us, to grant us a respite from the countless pressures that besiege us throughout the week. How does this happen? The Sabbath not only makes it possible, but, in fact, encourages it, because it is a day devoted to spiritual values" (Witty, p. 184).

"Scientists define work as something that burns calories. Their view is rational: labor is anything that uses energy. Something at rest uses no energy. When the [Jewish sages] of the Talmud looked for a definition of work, they viewed it quite differently. They connected work to creation. Work was changing the natural (created) world. Rest was leaving that world unchanged—allowing it to change us. Mordecai Kaplan explained it this way: 'An artist cannot be continually wielding his brush. He must stop at times in his painting to freshen his vision of the object, the meaning of which he wishes to express on his canvas.... The Shabbat represents those moments when we pause in our brushwork to renew our vision of this object. Having done so, we take ourselves to our painting with clarified vision and renewed energy.' Expanding on the same theme, Abraham Joshua Heshel said: 'Six days a week we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in our soul. Six days a week we seek to dominate the world; on the seventh day we try to dominate the self'" (Wolfson, p. 2).

## The Meaning of the Word Shabbat/שבת

The word *Sabbath* is represented by several related Hebrew words. Let's look at each of these words to see how the Scriptures use them.

- ☞ **Shabbat** (*Strong's* H7673) is a primitive root word meaning “to repose, rest, desist (from exertion or labor), cease.”
- ☞ **Shabbat** (*Strong's* Hebrew Dictionary word H7676; from H7673) means “intermission, i.e. (specifically) the Sabbath” and is used in reference to the weekly Sabbath, the Day of Atonement, the sabbatical year. Examples of its usage are found in the following passages:
  - The weekly Sabbath (Exod 16:25; 20:8, 10; 31:15; Deut 5:10, 12, 15; Lev 23:3)
  - Day of Atonement (Lev 16:31; 23:32)
  - Sabbath (i.e., sabbatical) year (Lev 25:4; 26:34, 43; 2 Chron 36:21)
  - Weeks of Sabbaths as in the Feast of Weeks (Lev 23:15; 25:8)
- ☞ **Shabbaton** (*Strong's* Hebrew Dictionary word H7677; from H7676) means “a Sabbath observance or a special set-apart day” and is used in reference to the weekly Sabbath, Day of Atonement, sabbatical year, Day of Trumpets and the first and last days of the Feast of Tabernacles. According to *The TWOT*, the *-on* ending is characteristic of certain abstract nouns in Hebrew. It gives no further explanations. Examples of its usage in the Tanakh include:
  - The weekly Sabbath (Exod 31:15; 16:23; 35:2; Lev 23:3)
  - Day of Atonement (Lev 16:31; 23:32)
  - Sabbatical year (Lev 25:4)
  - Feast of Trumpets (Lev 23:24)
  - First day of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day (Lev 23:34)

*The Pentateuch/Genesis*, by Samson Raphael Hirsch, commentary on Genesis 2:2 says, “The conception [of] *rest* does not contain the whole meaning of the root שבת /*shabbat*. *Shabbat* is no complete inactivity. *Shabbat* is the cessation of, leaving off, an activity that has been going on until then. The phonetic relationship to שות [shavat], שפת [shaphat], שפט [shafat], שפד [shaphad], שבט [shavat] never the less gives this root a positive meaning also. All these roots have the common underlying idea of bringing and keeping something in the place where it belongs; hence, placing, arranging in order, directing a skewer, a rod or staff. Hence שבת would mean such a ‘halt’ in an activity, through which persons and things are kept in the position, the setting, in which they should be, which is due and proper for them.... [W]ith the seventh day Elohim ceased from all the work He had done, for with the seventh day everything had reached the place in the Creation where it was always to be; Elohim ceased, because no further alteration was necessary. And שבת [Shabbat] was to teach Man too, to consider himself and the world in their true position. Provided that the week's work had been of the nature that Sabbath-laws proclaim that it should have been ... done in the service of Elohim—then a man can consider himself at every Sabbath as having reached his goal ... he ceases his work because according to the will of Elohim, he has done what he has to do, and with the entry of the Sabbath can lay down the completed six days' work in homage at the feet of Elohim—his Sabbath is true שבת [Shabbat]” (pp. 45–46).

When Hirsch notes that the underlying concept of the root SH-B-T is “bringing and keeping something in the place where it belongs or where it should be,” one cannot overlook the prophetic or millennial implications here—the concept of paradise regained, of a return to Eden sometime in the future. Indeed, many of the biblical Hebrew prophets have spoken of this very thing. They speak of a new heaven and a new earth, of a time when.... The prophetic implication of the seven-day week itself, and even of the number seven (i.e., completion or perfection) speaks to this idea. So again when we speak of the Sabbath think “back to the future” (e.g. Heb 4:1–11).

## Three Types of Sabbaths

From the brief word study above we see that there is the weekly Sabbath, the land Sabbath or sabbatical year where Israel YHVH commanded Israel to leave its agricultural land fallow every seven years, and, finally, the seven annual biblical festivals, one of which in one place was referred to as “a high [Sabbath] day” (John 19:31).

## Basic Scriptures Pertaining to the Weekly Sabbath

Below are listed the main scriptures containing the Sabbath command:

“And on the seventh day Elohim ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And Elohim blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which Elohim created and made.” (Gen 2:2–3)

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it set-apart. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of YHVH thy Elohim: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days YHVH made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore YHVH blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exod 20:8–11)

“And YHVH spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am YHVH that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is set-apart unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, set-apart to YHVH: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days YHVH made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.” (Exod 31:14–17)

And YHVH spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be set-apart: for I YHVH your Elohim am set-apart. Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my Sabbaths: I am YHVH your Elohim.” (Lev 19:1–3)

“Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an set-apart convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of YHVH in all your dwellings.” (Lev 23:3)

“And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the Sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath, or on the set-apart day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt” (Neh 10:31; see also 13:15–22).

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my set-apart day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the set-apart of YHVH, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in YHVH; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of YHVH hath spoken it.” (Isa 58:13–14)

## The Weekly and Seven Annual Sabbaths Are Feasts and Appointed Times

The Bible uses two Hebrew terms to describe the weekly and annual Sabbaths: *moedim* and *migra-ee kodesh*. Understanding the meanings of each term gives us a fuller comprehension of the dynamics of each of the Sabbaths.

All of these Sabbaths (weekly and annual) are called *appointed times (moedim)*. Nowhere in the Scriptures is there a more complete list in chronological order of YHVH's appointed times, including the weekly seventh day Sabbath than in Leviticus 23. In the opening verses of this chapter we read,

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts [or appointed times, *moedim*] of YHVH, which ye shall proclaim to be holy [set-apart] convocations [*migra-ee kodesh*], even these are my feasts [*moedim*]. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy [set-apart] convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of YHVH in all your dwellings. (verses 2–3)

There are three words in these verses that we want to quickly analyze for meaning. They are (as translated in the KJV):

- *Feasts* (meaning “appointed times”; Hebrew: *moedim*)
- *Convocations* (Hebrew: *migra*)
- *Holy* (meaning “set-apart”; Hebrew: *kodesh*)

Let's first define the word *feast*. What is a *feast*? *Feast* (commonly called *feast day/s*) is the Hebrew word *mo'ed*/מוֹעֵד or *mo'edim* (plural, *Strong's* H4150) meaning "an appointment, i.e., a fixed time or season; specifically a festival; an assembly convened for a definite purpose, the congregation; by extension, the place of meeting." Here are some examples of how *feast* (*moed*) is used in the Scriptures:

- Leviticus 23:2, 4, 37, 44, *feasts of YHVH*
- Leviticus 23:2, YHVH's *feasts*
- Numbers 15:3, *solemn* (i.e. *regularly appointed*) *feasts*
- Numbers 29:39, *set feasts* or *appointed festivals*
- 2 Chronicles 2:4, *solemn feasts of YHVH*

What is a *convocation*? It is the Hebrew word *migra*/מִקְרָא (*Strong's* H4744) meaning "a (sacred) assembly, reading, calling (together), a rehearsal." The word *migra* etymologically derives from the Hebrew word *qara*/קָרָא (*Strong's* H7121), which is a primitive root word meaning "to call, call out, recite, read, cry out, proclaim."

Here are some examples of how *migra* is used in the Scriptures:

- An assembly called together, a holy, sacred (or set-apart) convocation called together (Lev 23:2).
- The first and last days of the Days of Unleavened Bread (*Chag haMatzot*) are set-apart convocations and a Sabbath (Exod 12:16 and Lev 23:7–8).
- The weekly Sabbath is a set-apart convocation (Lev 23:3).
- The Feast of weeks (*Shavuot*, Pentecost, or Feast of First Fruits) is a set-apart convocation (Lev 23:21).
- The Feast of Trumpets (*Yom Teruah*) is a set-apart convocation (Lev 23:24).
- The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) is a set-apart convocation (Lev 23:27).
- The first day of the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) is a set-apart convocation (Lev 23:35).
- The Eighth Day after the conclusion of *Sukkot* (called *Shemini Atzeret*) is a set-apart convocation (Lev 23:36).
- The ministers of Elohim reading and explaining the Torah-Word of Elohim on the Day of Trumpets is a set-apart convocation (Neh 8:8).
- YHVH hates it when men profane YHVH assemblies or set-apart convocations (Isa 1:13)
- It's a set-apart convocation when YHVH's ministers used the silver trumpets in calling or mustering of the people of Israel (Num 10:2).

Finally what does the word *set-apart* or *kodesh*/קֹדֶשׁ mean as used in the term *set-apart* (or *kodesh*) *convocation* (*migra*) in Leviticus 23:2? The word *set-apart* is the Hebrew word *qodesh* (*Strong's* H6944) meaning "apartness, separateness, holiness, sacredness," and can refer to Elohim himself, or to places or things he makes set-apart or sets apart for a sacred use or purpose.

That which is set-apart (sacred or holy; e.g., YHVH Sabbaths and feasts) is in contradistinction to that which is profane, worldly or secular. When that which is set-apart is affected by that which is profane, the set-apart become defiled or polluted (e.g. Neh 13:17–18; Ezek 20:13; 22:8; 23:38 cp. Jer 17:27). As noted above, profaning, polluting or defiling YHVH's set-apart times (e.g., his Sabbaths and feasts) is a serious sin—something that YHVH hates (Isa 1:13).

### The Sanctity of the Sabbath

Let's now explore the concept of the holiness or sanctity of the Sabbath, as well listing some examples of profaning the Sabbath. As one Jewish sage explains, "When the Sabbath arrives, one should study its laws, customs and philosophical concepts, thereby heightening his awareness of its sanctity. One should take care to avoid conversations that would distract him from the sanctity of the Sabbath. Discussions of business affairs drag man's thoughts from the sacred, spiritual realm of the Sabbath down to the profane, mundane weekday world. Likewise, one should banish from his mind all worries and cares. In order to properly remember the joy of the Sabbath one must forget sad and mournful thoughts" (Feuer, p. 40).

"Rambam [a Jewish Medieval Torah commentator] teaches that sanctification of the Sabbath means a clear

demonstration of the supremacy of the seventh day over all the days that precede it and all the days that follow it. ... *Mechilta* observes, 'Display the uniqueness Sabbath! Dress differently, eat differently, drink differently!' If you wish to experience something of the spiritual existence of the world to come, sanctify the Sabbath" (Feuer, p. 41).

The Israelite can perfunctorily discharge his duty *to remember* and *to observe* the Shabbat by absentmindedly performing a few familiar rituals and casually observing a few annoying restrictions, but such a Sabbath is sorely lacking in sanctity. To hallow the Sabbath, one must make it the very essence of his being, the soul of his time. He must immerse himself in its powerful spirit and thrill to its sensation. The Israelite should use every precious moment of the Sabbath to lift himself closer and closer to Elohim (Feuer, p. 42).

"The blessing of the Sabbath, it must be noted, was that it was endowed with the spiritual exaltation, a sanctity which distinguishes it from all other days. In contrast to the festival which were dependent upon the observance by witnesses of the new moon and of the calendary calculations of the rabbinical courts, the Sabbath was imbued with its own sanctity—*independent of human activity*. This holiness was endowed by the Creator, who ordained that it continually and faithfully manifest itself every seventh day without interruption in testimony of [Elohim's] sovereignty over the universe" (Feuer, pp. 48).

### **The Sabbath is the Highlight and Most Important Day of the Week**

The Jewish sages teach that the Sabbath should be the highlight of the week. We must not count days as others count them, rather we should count every weekday in relation to the Sabbath. Rambam taught that other nations consider the weekdays to be unrelated to each other. Thus they give each a separate name after one of the heavenly planets or a particular deity. Israel, however, counts all days in reference to the Sabbath; e.g., one day toward the Sabbath, two days toward the Sabbath, etc. Thus, we fulfill the commandment to "Remember the Sabbath" every day of the week (Feuer, pp. 39-40).

### **An Everlasting Covenant Between YHVH and His People**

YHVH sanctioned the Sabbath as perpetual covenant and ordinance for his people. In fact, it was of such importance that he made it the unique and visible outward sign signifying his spiritual relationship or marriage covenant with his people (Exod 31:13-16).

There is not the slightest evidence anywhere in the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation that the special relationship YHVH has with his people via the Sabbath ever changed. In fact, the writer of Hebrews emphatically states that there remains to this day a Sabbath rest, or a keeping of the Sabbath (as the Greek reveals) for the people of Elohim (Heb 4:9). This rest is a prophetic picture of the upcoming spiritual rest YHVH will offer his people after the second coming of Yeshua and during the Promised Land of his millennial reign on earth (Heb 4:1-8).

### **The Relationship Between the Work Week and the Sabbath**

In the fourth commandment, man is not only commanded to rest on the seventh day, but to work on the other six day (Exod 20:9). To properly keep the seventh we must work on the other six. The Jewish sages teach that if one has no work to do, then let him find some work to do. If he has an abandoned property, let him build on it; if he has a desolate field, let him revitalize it (Feuer, p. 42).

"The *cessation of all work* is intended on the Sabbath, but the word *work* does not simply mean physical labor. *Work* is an act of creating, and when Elohim completed his creation, he gave us the Sabbath as a sign of his creative power. By refraining from *work* on the Sabbath, Jews serve as witnesses to Elohim's role as the Ultimate Creator.... The *Shabbat* comes to remind us that we must set aside our human powers to create, thereby honoring the Universal Creator" (Witty, p. 184).

The Jewish sages teach that if one dedicates their lives to YHVH and to the consecration of his Sabbath that he will guarantee that one will complete one's tasks in six days. However, the opposite is also true. Someone who lacks faith in this promise and encroaches upon the time allotted to Elohim's service will fail in all his undertakings and find that he never has time enough for his business affairs (Feuer, pp. 42-43).

### **The Scriptures Predict That Men Would Turn Away From the Sabbath**

The Sabbath is one of the hardest commands of Elohim for men to follow, and is often the first commandment that is abandoned when men apostatize from the truth of Elohim. For example, there was a strong current in the early church of the second-century to abandon the Sabbath in favor of Sunday. The Sabbath was officially jettisoned in favor of Sunday, and this became the law in the Roman Empire and early Catholic Church in the early



part the fourth century. Knowing men's proclivities to turn from the Sabbath is perhaps the reason that the Scriptures encourage us *not* to forget the Sabbath.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it set-apart. (Exod 20:8)

Keep [observe, safeguard, watch over] the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as YHVH your Elohim hat commanded you. (Deut 5:12)

And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. (Dan 7:25)

Remember you the Torah-law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb (i.e., Mount Sinai) for all Israel, with statutes and judgments. (Mal 4:4)

Think not that I came to destroy the Torah-law or the prophets... (Matt 5:17)

### The Sabbath in the Future

Not only did Yeshua and the first century believers observe the seventh-day Sabbath, but it will be observed in the future millennium after the second coming of Yeshua.

Thus saith the Adonai YHVH; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. (Ezek 46:1)

And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith YHVH. (Isa 66:23)

The Jewish sages also teach that the Sabbath will be observed in the world to come, and that it is a prophetic picture of that glorious time in the future. As one Jewish author writes, "If you wish to experience something of the spiritual existence of the World to Come, sanctify the Sabbath" (Feuer, p. 41).

### YHVH Commands His People to "Remember" and to "Observe" the Sabbath

The Torah lists the Ten Commandments in two places—Exodus 20:8 and Deuteronomy 5:12. In the former passage, YHVH commands us to, "**Remember** the Sabbath Day," while in the latter passage YHVH says, "**Keep** [literally, *safeguard, protect, watch over, have charge over, retain, treasure or observe*] the Sabbath day." Some see these apparent discrepancies in the texts as troubling, but the Jewish sages see them as complimentary concepts.

"Remembering the Sabbath day and observing it are two distinct precepts. *Remembering* refers to fulfilling the positive precepts associated with the Sabbath day. *Observing* refers to not violating the negative commandment of the Sabbath..." (Witty, pp. 155–156).

Rambam explains that *remember* is a positive commandment to perform acts that enhance the sanctity of the Sabbath. *Observe* is a negative commandment which warns us to prevent and refrain from desecration of the Sabbath. With reference to these differing texts, the sages taught that *remember* and *observe* were both spoken in a single utterance. Saying two words simultaneously is a miraculous superhuman feat which no mouth can accomplish and no ear can hear. As the sages explain, though Elohim made only one utterance, Israel heard the two separate commandments. With this in mind, the Psalmist extols the Almighty (Ps 62:12), "Once has Elohim spoken; twice have I heard this—that strength belongs to Elohim." The purpose of this miracle was to demonstrate that the themes of honoring the Sabbath in a positive manner and avoiding its desecration are interconnected (Feuer, p. 40).

### Israel Commanded to Hear, Do and Obey YHVH's Shabbat Commands

The *Shema* is Israel's statement of faith where YHVH's people pronounce allegiance to him. It is found in Deuteronomy 6:4–9...

Hear [*shema*], O Israel: YHVH our Elohim is one YHVH: And thou shalt love YHVH thy Elohim with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest **up**. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall

be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

*Hear* is the Hebrew word *shema* (*Strong's* H8085) meaning “to hear/listen, to understand, to consent, to obey.” In short, the word *shema* means to **hear** and to **obey**!

The *Shema* has been recited, declared and chanted by Jews and Israelites for thousands of years as a public affirmation of their faithfulness and devotion to YHVH and his commandments. The word *shema* hearkens back to Mount Sinai where the children of Israel promised to **hear** and to **obey** (*shema*) the covenant that they had just made with YHVH (Exod 24:7) and to keep all his Torah commandments.

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that YHVH hath said will we do, and **be obedient** [*shema*]. (Exod 24:7)

The *Shema* also hearkens forward to when YHVH promised to raise up a prophet [i.e., the Messiah] like Moses to whom the people of Israel would be required to **hear** and to **obey** (*shema*).

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not **hearken** [obey/*shema*] unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (Deut 18:18–19)

That same Prophet, Yeshua the Messiah, cited the first and main part of the *Shema* as being representative of ALL the commandments (*mitzvot*) of Torah, that if one will HEAR and DO, one will LIVE.

And Yeshua answered him, The first of all the commandments is, **Hear** [*shema*], O Israel; YHVH our Elohim is one Lord: And thou shalt love YHVH thy Elohim with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.... [Mark 12:29–31; cp. Matt 22:40]. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets .... [Luke 10:28] [T]his do, and **thou shalt live**.

*Live* here is the Greek word *zao* (*Strong's* G2198) and is used numerous times in the Testimony of Yeshua (the New Testament) to refer not only to physical, but to spiritual and to eternal life.

A parallel passage in the Gospels where Yeshua and the rich, young ruler have the following exchange:

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life [*zoe*, *Strong's* G2222]? And he said unto him ... if thou wilt *enter into life* [*zoe*], keep the commandments [the Torah]. He saith unto him, Which? Yeshua said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Matt 19:16–19)

Although Yeshua didn't give the young man the satisfaction of leading him to believe that Torah-observance would guarantee him eternal life in the world to come apart from following Messiah, neither did Yeshua disagree with the young man's assertion that there were spiritual benefits to Torah obedience.

## HOW DO WE CELEBRATE THE SABBATH?

**N**OW THAT WE UNDERSTAND the spiritual meaning, purpose and blessing of the Sabbath, how do we properly, according to the Bible, observe the Sabbath. *What* we do is called our *halachah*—a Hebrew word meaning “how we walk out a Bible command.”

### YHVH Commands Man to Work for Six Days

As noted above, one can't fully appreciate the Sabbath unless one has worked during the previous six days, and, in turn, has a need and a reason to rest. In fact, YHVH commands man to work for six days and bring in or to gather all his food. No gathering of food is to occur on the Sabbath.

Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. (Exod 16:26)

After one has labored intensely all week, one is ready to rest, and happily so! It's time to "kick back" and to enjoy the fruits of one's labors, and then to lift one's spiritual sights above the mundane plain in order to discover (or reconnect with) the greater and higher meaning life, which should involve loftier aspirations than merely slaving away for transitory material necessities and wants.

### **Sabbath Is a Time for the Community to Come Together—A Picture of Eden**

An aspect of the Edenic ideal and the Sabbatical Year is the sharing of the fruit of the earth freely by all. Ideally, no one owns the earth, for the earth is YHVH's and the fullness there of, as the Scriptures say (1 Cor 10:26). So on the Sabbath and in the Sabbatical Year there is the sharing of the fruits of the earth and private right of ownership over those fruits are suspended to replicate Eden. What was private is now shared. "All households thereby commingle their property rights so that they will then form of various private domains a single common estate ... The medium by which the one or the other procedure is carried out is called an *erub*, a medium of commingling, thus, referring to either the symbolic, shared meal or equally fictive demarcation line, as the case requires: a meal of commingling, or a boundary marker for commingling ownership of private property ... The Sabbatical Year, *Shebi'it*, supplies the key. *Erubin*, with its sustained exercise of thought on the commingling of ownership of private property for the purpose of Sabbath observance and on the commingling of meals to signify shared ownership, accomplishes for Israel's Sabbath what *Sebi'it* achieves for the Land's. On the Sabbath inaugurated by the Sabbatical Year, the Land, so far as it is otherwise private property, no longer is possess exclusively by the householder. To too, the produce of the Land consequently belongs to everybody" (Neusner, p. 73).

"What then takes place inside the walls of the Israelite household when time takes over space and revises the conduct of ordinary affairs? Israel goes home to Eden. How best to make the statement that the land is Israel's Eden, that Israel imitates Elohim by keeping the Sabbath—meaning, not doing things that Elohim did in creating the world but the things Elohim ceased to do on the Sabbath—and that to restore its Eden, Israel must sustain its life—nourish itself—where it belongs?" (Neusner, p. 78).

### **The Preparation Day: Preparing for the Sabbath**

The Creator not only commands man to work for six days as a precursor to resting on the seventh day, but to fully enjoy the peace, rest and sanctity of the Sabbath, the Scriptures instruct man also to prepare ahead of time for this day.

And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily ... And he said unto them, "This is that which YHVH hath said, 'Tomorrow is the rest of the set-apart Sabbath unto YHVH: bake that which ye will bake to day, and boil that ye will boil; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.'" (Exod 16:5, 23; see also Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31)

Not only should food preparation be on our "to do" list for the sixth day, but also consider doing the following to insure one's full enjoyment of the Sabbath and compliance with the letter of the law as well as the spiritual intent of the Sabbath:

- Have clothes washed and clean for the Sabbath.
- Fill the car with gas if you have to travel to be with a congregation.
- Do all your shopping, so that no buying or selling has to occur on the Sabbath.
- Prepare your own personal "Garden of Eden" by cleaning the house, mowing your grass.
- Think and plan ahead what activities you might want to do on the Sabbath that will edify you and your family spiritually and bring you closer to Elohim.

Once all your work is done, and you've prepared for the Sabbath, you are now ready to sit back and to enjoy it!

### **Attendance of Organized Meetings on the Sabbath**

As noted above, the Sabbath is a time for YHVH's people to gather together for a "commanded assembly" or *miqra kodesh* (Exod 12:6; Lev 23:3). Below we will discover what were considered normative Sabbath activities during Bible times.

### Acceptable Sabbath-Day Activities

What can I do on the Sabbath? This is a question that many people have—especially our children. The Sabbath can be a joyful and exciting day. As we look to the Bible for answers to this question, we find many wonderful possibilities to make this day not only enjoyable, but spiritually meaningful and edifying.

As we study the Scriptures, we see that certain activities were viewed to be within the perimeters of the purpose of the Sabbath, which is to draw humans closer to Elohim, their Creator, and to one another. These activities include...

- The Scriptures were read and taught to the people on the Sabbath day (Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14–15, 27, 44; 15:21; 17:2).
- The Word of Elohim could be taught on the Sabbath (Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16–27, 31; Acts 13:15–48; 15:21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4).
- Preaching occurred on the Sabbath (Acts 13:42; 15:21).
- Exhorting (or strongly encouraging or urging) one another occurred on the Sabbath (Acts 13:15).
- The gifts of the Set-Apart Spirit of Elohim were practiced on the Sabbath in the congregation (1 Cor 12 and 14).
- Work connected with religious service was lawful on the Sabbath (Num 28:9; Matt 12:5; John 7:23).
- Good deeds and works of mercy are lawful on the Sabbath such as healing the sick (Matt 12:11–12; Mark 3:1–5; Luke 6:6–10; 13:10–13; 14:1–4; John 5:8–16; 9:14).
- Acts needed to sustain life could be performed on the Sabbath such as feeding farm animals, pulling an ox out of a ditch or performing a circumcision (Matt 12:1–5; Mark 2:23–26; Luke 6:1–4; 13:15; 14:5; John 7:22–23).
- One is not to go out of one's dwelling place on the Sabbath to gather food (to work, earn a living; see Exod 16:29–30), but attendance of religious meeting is acceptable (see below).
- Yeshua attended synagogue on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:16; 6:6; 13:10).
- Paul attended synagogue on the Sabbath and taught or discussed the Scriptures (Acts 13:14, 42; 17:2 and 18:4).
- The apostles encouraged believers to attend synagogue on the Sabbath (Acts 15:21).
- Traveling a short distance to get to the Sabbath services is acceptable (Acts 1:12).
- Sabbath services could be held outdoors in a beautiful setting even if it was necessary to hike there on foot (Acts 16:13).
- Gather together to worship YHVH on the Sabbath (Lev 23:3; Isa 66:23; Ezek 46:3; Acts 16:13; 18:4).
- It was acceptable to heal the sick on the Sabbath (Matt 12:9–14; Mark 3:1–6; Luke 6:6–11; 13:14; John 5:9; 9:14)

Most of these principles apply to the seven biblical feasts as well.

### Keep the Sabbath Set-Apart (*Kadosh*); Do Not Defile It

To properly observe this holy or set-apart day, one must construct boundaries around it to protect it from the secular or mundane activities of life from which the Sabbath has not only been separated, but elevated. This is sanctifying the Sabbath or setting it apart for a holy purpose. In so doing, we're uniting in agreement and aligning ourselves with the Creator of the Sabbath. In this sense, heaven and earth meet and commune at the locus of the Sabbath.

Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is set-apart unto you: every one that defileth [profane, pollute, break, wound, desecrate] it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. (Exod 31:14)

Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to YHVH, to serve him, and to love the name of YHVH, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant. (Isa 56:6)

To allow anything secular to cross over the line between the work week and the Sabbath is akin to allowing sewage to seep into the crystal pure waters of mountain spring. This is how the Sabbath is profaned or polluted. To the degree that one allows the Sabbath to be profaned in one's life is the degree to which the Sabbath can't be a blessing—a river of life to its beneficiaries. Since the ultimate blessing of the Sabbath is about man's communion with his Creator, then to profane the Sabbath is to inhibit that process. It's like throwing boulders to create dams in the river of life that flows earthward from heaven.

As YHVH blessed and sanctified the Sabbath (Gen 2:3; Exod 20:11; Deut 5:12), man is to do the same (Neh 13:22; Jer 17:24).

### What Kind of Work Is Forbidden on the Sabbath?

The word *work* can mean different things to different people. What really matters is how YHVH in his Word, the Bible, defines *work*. It is this kind of work that YHVH instructs man to rest from. In the Sabbath commandment we read,

*Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work [melakah]: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of YHVH thy Elohim: in it thou shalt not do any work [melakah], thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days YHVH made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore YHVH blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Exod 20:9–10; also Lev 23:3)*

The word *labour* (*Strong's* H5647) in verse 9 is the Hebrew word *avad* meaning “to work, to serve, to labour, to do work, to work for another, to serve another by labor.” The word *work* in verses 9 and 10 is the Hebrew word *melakah* (*Strong's* H4399) and means “occupation, work, business, workmanship, service and is translated.”

The phrase *servile work* (e.g. Lev 23:7, 8, 21, 25, 35, 36 and as found in *KJV* and *Soncino Edition Pentateuch*) is translated as *laborious work* in the *Stone Edition Tanach* and *ordinary work* in the *Complete Jewish Bible*. The word *servile* is the Hebrew word *avodah* (*Strong's* H5656) and means “labor, service, labor of a slave or servant, work.” This word is translated in the *KJV* by the following words: *service, servile, work, bondage, act, serve, tillage, labour*.

Not only does YHVH command his people to rest on the seventh-day Sabbath, but on the seven annual Sabbaths or biblical feasts as well. Both the weekly Sabbath and biblical festivals are days where YHVH commands his people to rest and to participate in a *set-apart convocation* or *solemn assembly*. While on the weekly Sabbath *all work* is to cease, on the set-apart feast days only *servile work* is prohibited (except on the Day of Atonement when *all work* is to cease, as on the weekly Sabbath (Lev 23:28, 30, 31).

The prohibition against *servile (avodah) work (melakah)* is found in the following passages in Leviticus 23:

- On the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:7–8)
- Pentecost (Lev 23:21)
- The Feast of Trumpets (Lev 23:25)
- The Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:35)
- The Eighth Day (Lev 23:36).

The point of this word study is this. All work is prohibited on the weekly Sabbath and on the Day of Atonement, and only employment or hard, laborious work is prohibited on the other biblical festivals. In other words, the preparation of food, for example, is permitted on all the biblical feasts with exception of the Day of Atonement, of course, where food and drink are not to be eaten, much less prepared.

According to Jewish tradition, one type of work may be permitted on the Sabbath—that is the saving of a life when one's life is in danger. “Violate one Sabbath in order that [someone may live] to observe many Sabbaths” (Talmud Yoma 85b). This may be considered an ox-in-a-ditch situation, to which both the Torah and Yeshua refer, and which we discuss above.

### A Quick Overview Biblical Commandments (*Mitzvot*) Regarding the Weekly Sabbath

- The Sabbath as a time of rest from work was instituted by YHVH (Gen 2:2–3; Heb 4:4).
- The Sabbath to be kept set-apart (Exod 20:8; 31:14; 35:2; Deut 5:12; Isa 56:2; Jer 17:22; Ezek 20:16, 20).
- Six days of the week are to be used for labor, and the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest in which man shall do no work (Exod 16:22; 23:12; 31:15; 34:21; 35:2; Lev 23:3; Deut. 5:13–14; Neh 13:15.)

- YHVH's commands man to keep his Sabbaths (Exod 31:12–14; Lev 19:3, 30; 26:2; Deut 5:12).
- No selling or marketing is to transpire on the Sabbath (Neh 10:31; 13:15–22 cp. Exod 20:10–11).
- No burdens are to be carried during the Sabbath (Neh 13:19; Jer. 17:21–22, 27).
- Provide for food needed on the Sabbath in advance so it need not be gathered, bought or cooked on the Sabbath (Exod 16:5, 22–30).
- One is not to light fires on the Sabbath (Exod 35:3). Some Bible scholars believe that the prohibition to light fires on the Sabbath strictly applies to fires pertaining to use in one's occupation and not for those started for heat and light purposes. This interpretation is based on the fact that the verses directly following this one pertain to the construction of the Tabernacle of Moses.
- We are not seek our own pleasure on the Sabbath (Isa 58:13). Some biblical exegetes see this scripture as referring to the Day of Atonement or *Yom Kippur* because of the previous verses' connection of the Sabbath to fasting. The Day of Atonement is the only Sabbath day which is also a fast day and is a day of great sobriety, grief and repentance. The Hebrew word for *pleasure* is *chepetz* (*Strong's* H2656/*TWOT* 712b) meaning "to experience emotional delight" (according to *TWOT*). Indeed, the Day of Atonement is not to be a day of emotional delight, although the weekly Sabbath most definitely is to be so. In Isaiah 58:12–14 we read,
- "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy **pleasure** [2656] on my set-apart day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the set-apart of YHVH, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own **pleasure** [2656], nor speaking thine own words. Then shalt thou delight thyself in YHVH; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth..." (KJV revised)

An Orthodox Jewish translation of this verse reads:

If you restrain your foot because it is the Sabbath; refrain from accomplishing your own needs on My holy day; if you proclaim the Sabbath 'a delight,' and the holy [day] of [YHVH] 'honored,' and you honor it by not engaging in your own affairs, from seeking your own needs or discussing the forbidden—then you will delight in [YHVH], and I will mount you astride the heights of the world. ...  
(*The ArtScroll Stone Edition Tanach*)

However one reads this verse, whether it is referring to the weekly Sabbath or to the Day of Atonement, which is an annual Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath is to be a delight, and should be reserved for primarily seeking those things that draw us closer to our Creator, and away from those things that are carnal and earthly.

### Conclusion: The Sabbath In the Testimony of Yeshua

Much has been said in the church about how (allegedly) the first-century believers changed their day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday. Just because a concept has been taught and believed by a many for centuries doesn't necessarily make it true. Remember the flat-earthers and those who taught that the earth was at the center of the solar system? Additionally, just because "enlightened" moderns believe something doesn't make it true either (take for example the theory of evolution). Truth is still truth, and error is error regardless of who believes it and for how long they have believed it. No matter what, the Scriptures admonish believers to prove all things and to hold fast to that which is good (1 Thess 5:21).

Much could be written on the validity of the Sabbath in the Testimony of Yeshua, but suffice it to say there is not a single place in the entire corpus of the apostolic writers that explicitly or even implicitly states or infers that Sunday supplanted the Sabbath. True, there are examples of believers meeting on the first day (actually it was on evening of the Sabbath *after* a regular Sabbath service, which in Hebrew reckoning is the beginning of the first day of the week), but, again, none of these verses prove that Sabbath observance was abrogated.

Some will even quote various passages in the Testimony of Yeshua supposedly proving that the YHVH's Torah-law was "done away with," "nailed to the cross," that Yeshua "was the end of the law," and that believers are no longer "under the law" therefore proving (supposedly) that we can (presumably) break the law (and therefore to follow this line of logic murder, adultery and stealing are no permissible). Do these interpretations square with the facts as laid out in clear and simple Word of Elohim? Let's answer this question by establishing some facts.

- YHVH's character is perfect and righteous. What was right and righteous for him in the past will remain so in the future. His standards of righteousness and perfection do not change. (Ps 100:5; Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17). They are immutable. He is not a man that he should lie (Num 23:19).
- YHVH does not have one set of rules for one group of people and another set of rules and standards of righteousness for another group of people. YHVH is not a respecter of persons in this regard (Acts 10:34; Deut 10:17; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; 1 Pet 1:17). His ways are straight and narrow (Matt 7:14). His ways are truth (Ps 119:142,151; John 17:17). Yeshua, the Word of Elohim made flesh (John 1:1-14), is truth and light. Truth is light (Ps 119:105; Prov 6:23). Free of outside influences light always travels in a straight line. Therefore, what was truth in the past, is still truth today. What was truth for the Israelites and later the Jews is still the same truth for followers of the Bible today.
- Since Yeshua was the Word of Elohim in flesh-form and in him dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col 2:9), it follows that his physical life on earth was a reflection of the perfect will and character of YHVH Elohim (John 4:34; 6:38; 5:30; Matt 26:39). As such, all of his words, thoughts and deeds lined up perfectly with the Torah, which was the mind, will and character of the Creator.
- Because Yeshua was the Torah-law of Elohim made flesh, he in no way could have abrogated or nullified it (rendered it inoperative and non-binding; John 1:1-14; Matt 5:16-17).
- The apostles were commanded to be faithful to and to carry forth the teachings of Yeshua and to teach their disciples *to observe all* that Yeshua had commanded them (Matt 28:20). This includes Yeshua's adherence to his defense of the Torah in its fullness (e.g., Matt 5:17-19).
- Paul was a follower or imitator of Yeshua and urged believers to follow him in this (1 Cor 11:1).
- Paul, the one who many claim freed us from the Torah-law, actually spoke favorably of the Torah-law (Rom 7:12, 14) and remained obedient to it until his dying day (Acts 24:14; 25:8; 28:16,23).

Those who claim that YHVH's Torah-law (his instructions in righteousness) of which the Sabbath is a part, is no longer relevant have some explaining to do in light of the truths presented above. We leave it up to the reader to ascertain where the truth lies. As for us, we will choose to serve and obey YHVH with a heart of love and in faith, while at the same time refusing to succumb to traditions of men by which the Word of YHVH Elohim is made of non-effect of which Sunday's replacement of the Sabbath is one (Mark 7:7-9).

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