

## **The Seventh Day: An Appointed Time**

*Notes of Ed Nelson*

We are products of our culture and the times in which we live. All this colors the way we read the Bible and how we paint it's teachings with the shades, hues and tones of our education and age.

Bible interpretation is vital for civilization to remain civil, and for the good news of the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua) to be proclaimed to all nations in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and faithfulness.

When a culture does not have the footprint of the Bible upon its conscience, missionaries should be sent. Usually the societal consequence of biblical illiteracy is a diminished worth of life, family disintegration, lower scale innovation, increased immorality, slavery politics, social injustice and a general spirit of lawlessness. Poverty and fatalism tend to follow.

The Bible is important to the architecture of society. The higher the scale of biblical literacy, a more compassionate and just society tends to exist.

Bible literacy requires study. When we do not understand the ancient biblical Hebraic teachings of the Bible in its ancient culture, languages and times, our interpretations may be quite alien to the original intention of the Bible writers.

Most Christians, and by "most" we primarily mean gentile believers in the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua), who read the Bible—if they do—tend to interpret the Bible out of their life and church experience rather than through the wisdom of study of its original context and content. If we do not know what it meant in the original context, how can we adapt and apply it in our own times?

We wish it were not so. But the Church's deep, systemic teachings from the flourishing Greco-Roman worldview of Late Antiquity color most everything it teaches today. The paint bucket of our collective Western cultures and modern times spill out across the pages of the Bible. The original context and content is hard to read through the paint. The result is a kind of biblical illiteracy where the Bible is not banned. It is just neglected. Society and family crumble.

No wonder we have a serious issue with biblical illiteracy in Western Christianity today. It's not a new problem, but it is disappointing that we don't know the Bible better in the Christian churches. The correction is to raise up within the Church adherents with a burning passion to know the Bible's ancient paths. But that requires a diligent study of the ancient languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, something that isn't likely to happen for most.

One area of biblical interpretation some struggle with today is how to understand the Sabbath. Honestly, most don't struggle with it at all. But for those who do, it is a real struggle.

One of the reasons the teaching about the Sabbath is neglected, misinterpreted or reinterpreted for Western culture where the Church has its footprint, is that the Greco-Roman worldview is contrary to the Hebrew worldview. A Greco-Roman Church will follow the philosophy of the

Greco-Roman worldview, consciously or unconsciously. The two paths are polarities—the wisdom of man versus the wisdom of God.

A good question for us to think about is this. Would you rather live in a society where the Bible's footprint is missing, where the concept of Sabbath is non-existent, or would you rather live in a society where the Sabbath is recognized as important, even if it may be misunderstood? Which is better for you, and for society at large?

Which society would be more relational, family friendly, productive and prosperous? The society which allows for those who practice a Sabbath, or one that does not? You see, which type of society we chose will have consequences on our standard of living. History is replete with examples on this macro-scale.

### **How Should the Sabbath be Understood for Today?**

We either choose a popular Western view about the Sabbath based on Greco-Roman hermeneutics, or we choose a biblical view based on ancient Hebrew hermeneutics.

We prefer to look at the Sabbath day from an ancient, biblical Hebraic understanding—from the *Tanakh* (the Old Testament) through the inspired writings of the first century Judean Nazarenes. We do not prefer to entertain, at least substantively, views that developed during and after the fourth century with emergent Greco-Roman Catholicism. This line of demarcation is a hermeneutical decision.

### **Ask the Rabbis**

A general rule of thumb, when in doubt, is to ask your learned Jewish friends, at least those who are well studied in the Hebrew Bible. It's a beginning, but not the end of the matter. They are a helpful resource up through "the parting of the ways", as it is known, between Rabbinic Judaism and the followers of the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua) during the period of AD 130 to 325.

The drawback, and it is not minor, is that most Jewish people today don't know the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua) as a living, saving experience of faith and obedience based upon his resurrection from the dead and ascension into glory. "The parting of the ways" during the second to fourth centuries saw to it.

As a result, our Jewish scholarly friends may be excellent in describing the wonder of the Sabbath day, something we can learn much from, but they will not be able to take us into its full expression in light of the revelation of the Messiah. Yes, some long for it today, and genuinely so. They know that He is coming, but, with veils upon their eyes, fail to see that the Messiah has come and will return a second time. When He came the first time, He taught much about the Sabbath, and the Sabbath rest He offers.

If we neglect the teachings of the rabbis about the ancient understanding of the Sabbath and what it meant for them historically, we do so at the peril of our misunderstanding it. We should not let gentiles tell us what they think the rabbis teach. We should read the rabbis ourselves—primary sources—to gain a foundational reference for interpreting the Sabbath.

A case in point is the wonderful book by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), *The Sabbath* (1951). He teaches that for the Sabbath to be understood, it must be understood as time, not space. But not just any time. It must be understood in its biblical context as “holy time.” His biblical exegesis ponders the wonder in the idea that on the Sabbath day time is sanctified from the plain (*pashat*) meaning of Genesis 2:1-3.

### **Ask the Messianic Jewish Rabbis**

Once we learn how the rabbis understood the Sabbath, we should ask the Messianic rabbis and teachers about their view. Like the rabbis, the range of views in Messianic Judaism are sometimes wide and controversial among themselves, let alone among others not of their persuasion. Views run the gamut within this framework of thought.

We owe deep respect and appreciation to our Messianic Jewish friends who uphold the deity of the Messiah. We should admire their devout lives and consider their published works, particularly those writings that reclaim the Jewishness of Jesus (Yeshua).

To reclaim the Jewishness of Jesus (Yeshua), Messianic Judaism rightly contends with the Church’s grievous error from Late Antiquity to diminish the Lord’s Jewishness altogether, to see him as a rebel to his Jewish life and culture, as one who overthrew his heritage. How unfortunate and mistaken!

Messianic Jews reclaim our Savior’s Jewishness, his heritage in Israel, and his fullness of the Torah. Messianic Judaism rejects the Church’s historical claim that Israel has no place in God’s covenant plan, the so-called “replacement theology” that infuses Roman Catholicism and Protestantism even today. “Replacement theology”, an anti-Semitic doctrine, is a reprehensible doctrine. Gladly, many gentile believers today reject it outright as spurious.

Messianic Jews also contend that the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua) should be embraced by one of his eternal names, “the Lord of the Sabbath” (*cf.* Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5).

Further, Messianic Jews teach that Jesus (Yeshua) is the fullness of the Torah, and not the abolisher of it (*cf.* Matthew 5:17).

Moreover, they claim that He should be interpreted from the whole of the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) as the One sent by his Father to reveal Himself in calendar-like fashion at Yahweh’s “appointed times” with Israel. Like the Bereans of the Book of Acts did.

In fact, John’s Gospel, the last of the Four Gospels written, is framed around Yeshua’s activities in relationship to and observance of the seven annual “appointed times”. John, written for Jews (with gentiles reading over their Torah-observant shoulders), makes the self-understood point that Jesus (Yeshua) observed these holy times. Moreover, John tells of Jesus (Yeshua) observing the additional “appointed time” from the days of Esther—Chanukah.

### **Ask Gentile Christian Bible Scholars**

We should also ask gentile Christian Bible scholars about the Sabbath. They have a wide range of views. Whereas the rabbis and the Messianic Jewish rabbis agree mostly about the Sabbath day,

the High Sabbaths, and the “appointed times”, gentile Bible scholars tend to be much less agreeable and more divided these days among themselves.

Global divisions of gentile Christianity are the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant Reformed churches. We may learn from all branches.

Gentile Christianity is an anomaly. You have liberals, moderates, progressives, conservatives, evangelicals, Fundamentalists, Pentecostals, charismatics, and an assortment of other Christian bodies and groups. Then, we have about a hundred major denominations and institutional fellowships within these ranges.

Their views on Bible interpretation depend upon how they view and adhere to Greco-Roman philosophy, the history of Israel, the history of the Church, priority of the biblical languages, hermeneutics, creedal statements, the right of Israel to exist, spiritual experiences, mysticism, syncretism, the mission of God, and so much more. All claim to be right.

Roman Catholicism and Protestantism mostly entertain the view that the Sabbath day was “replaced” with Sunday. It was part of the “replacement theology” that prevailed within Catholicism to altogether dismiss the nation of Israel and its people, to spurn them, and to claim their covenants. Historically, some views are quite dogmatic, others less so.

“Replacement theology” with its “replacement Sabbath” interpretation emerged under the Neo-Platonic influence of Athens upon the Church during the third and fourth centuries when the Jewish Nazarene movement was persecuted by Rabbinic Judaism and gentile Christianity. The Roman Emperor Constantine was largely responsible for the Church’s position against Jewish believers, enforcing the position through edict and the persuasion of the Latin Church Fathers like Athanasius. Augustine was a major influence in shaping the theology of the Latin Church.

Among Christian Bible scholars who accept the Sabbath as the seventh day is also the view among some of them that it is unimportant, or overstated for today. They hold that the seventh day doesn’t matter according to God’s reckoning of time as long as some alternate day of rest and relaxation is experienced occasionally, not necessarily within a seven day period.

The wide range of opinions among Christian scholars depends upon one’s upbringing, culture and church relationships, and less upon biblical exegesis, though the claim is made otherwise by most. It ultimately relates to how the Torah is viewed in light of the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua), and how it is understood and practiced. The issue is hermeneutical first, theological second.

### **The Weekly Sabbath is About Israel’s New Identity at Mt. Sinai, Not Legalism**

If you should say that the Sabbath is important to remember and observe, someone else may say you’re legalistic. What is perceived often by gentile Christians as legalistic is anything but legalistic to most Jews.

Among gentile Christians, some even hold that the fourth commandment—the most written about among the Ten Commandments—is no more valid since Jesus (Yeshua) died for our sins. Such a view accepts a hermeneutic foreign to the first century believers. During the first century

to the third century, the Ten Commandments were viewed as ten, not nine. But it would change with the weight of Neo-Platonic thought influencing the Church's hermeneutics.

Is it Ten Commandments, or nine, or any lesser number that applies today for the believer in the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua)?

The ancient biblical Hebraic understanding of the Ten Commandments gives us a clue. If you remove the fourth commandment, as we shall see, then the ninth commandment must be excluded, too. Here's why.

The Judean Nazarene Writings of the Apostles, the "New Testament", taught that if you break one of these commandments, it is as if you broke them all. They hang together as God's instruction, as a unity of principles to live by. They fold upon each other as if they were only two—love God and love your neighbor.

Take the two greatest commandments, love God and others. Now unfold them. They give you the Ten Commandments.

Consider that the Sabbath commandment—the fourth of ten—is not really about law so much as it is about an instructive principle about the seventh day. In fact, in the Hebrew Bible they are not called the Ten Commandments at all, but the Ten "Words"—or Ten Principles.

These ten principles are not about legalities of a courtroom as some may suppose, but ten principles to live by. In fact, they are five corresponding principles rather than ten as we shall see.

The Ten Commandments teach us to honor God and respect humanity. They are ten ways to show our love for God and other—five to honor and obey our Creator (and little "creators—our parents), and five to honor and respect others. These commandments are all about wholesome values for living life in the kingdom of God that are best for us to obey individually and as a society.

### **Understanding the Principles of the Ten Commandments**

The Ten Commandments (*Aseret haDibroth*) were engraved onto two stone tablets. We are wise to recognize that these ten "words" (*dibroth*)==principles—were not inscribed by "the finger of God" on only one tablet. Yahweh had a divine purpose for two tablets.

If the best interests of Moses was considered, Yahweh would have used only one tablet for Moses (Moshe) to carry down the mountain under an elderly man's strength. But two tablets were required. The two tablets doubled the weight Moses at 80 years of age lifted down the mountain.

What were the two tablets about?

Moses (Moshe) understood. His learned mind kept him aware of Genesis 1:26. This verse of Scripture teaches that man was made in (1) the image (*tzelem*) and (2) the likeness (*demuth*) of God—two parts of a whole. The image (*tzelem*) of God is about being spiritual beings full of life

given by God to honor and love Him, our Creator. “The likeness of God” (*demuth*) is about living life out according to God’s attributes—according to his behavior in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and faithfulness. For a full description of his attributes see Exodus 34:6-7.

Therefore, the Ten Commandments (“Principles”) are about two tablets and their divine purpose.

Let’s look at the two tablets.

The first tablet is about our relationship with our Creator. We are to honor God the Creator as people made in his image. Included is the honoring of our natural parents (the fifth commandment) who participate in God’s creative acts of creating humankind. Parents are our little “creators”.

The second tablet is about our relationship with others. We should relate to others according to the likeness of God—according to his behavior towards us. In this relationship with others, we are to act according to Yahweh’s name as told Moses on Mt. Sinai. We are to be “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness” (Exodus 34:6-7).

The two tablets, therefore, remind us that we belong to the Creator as being “made in his image [*tzelem*] and likeness [*demuth*]” and are to act accordingly—as image and likeness—in the world towards God and others.

True, man sinned in the Garden of Eden and everything changed. We became sinners by nature. The force of this reality is no more apparent than in the description God gave of the birth of Seth to Adam and Eve. Whereas, the Scripture says that Adam was made in the image and likeness of God, it teaches differently about Seth, as for his brothers Cain and Abel. Of Seth the Scriptures teach that he was “made in the likeness and image of Adam” (Genesis 5:3).

Observe that the terms are reversed. Adam was made in God’s “image and likeness”—spiritual altogether. Seth was made in sinful Adam’s “likeness and image”. According to Adam’s “likeness” comes first. Why? Because the likeness of Adam—his attributes of behavior—were sinful, after the flesh and not after the spiritual.

Because all successive generations are Adam-like, of the fleshly attributes of sinful nature, and not God-like according to his holiness, Yahweh dealt with mankind through commandments, statutes and ordinances. These were an external word of God to humanity because the internal word of man’s heart became instinctual first, after the flesh, and not after the Spirit of God. Our sinful nature rejects the word of God. We prefer to live as sinful man by our instincts, by our internal compass to navigate life by.

No greater reflection of the external word of God spoken to humanity is in his covenant relationship with Israel. The Ten Commandments (“Principles”) are part of this external word of God to Israel. The nation is to be separate from all nations as “a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6) whereby “the likeness and image of Adam” is addressed as to what it should be, “the image and likeness of God.”

The Ten Commandments (“Principles”) gave Israel its unique identity among the nations as a nation of laws, as do the other 603 commandments which, under close examination, are commentary on the Ten Commandments, expanding and managing their implementation in the society of Israel.

The Ten Commandments does this. It is a core aspect of Israel’s identity. In so doing, it reminds Israel and the nations how darkened we are from the light and life of God. We cannot save ourselves by our own methods and means. Yahweh must save us from ourselves—Jew and gentile.

The Ten Commandments (“Principles”) are, therefore, contrary to our natural, instinctive desires. The two tablets represent our hope that God did not quit on us as He did the first world order where lawlessness prevailed in every human heart except in Noah and his small family of eight. All the rest were destroyed in the Flood.

The Ten Commandments were given to Israel to guard and obey in order to promise a restored humanity—a new man in the Messiah. Meanwhile, they restrain lawlessness in human attitude and behavior in the world wherever they are applied to family and society.

The last age will once again be a lawless age as in the days of Noah. The rejection of the Ten Commandments will bring about a world of lawlessness that, as in the first world order of Adam through Noah, will be judged by God at the Messiah’s return. The United States of America is one of the few nations that applied the Ten Commandments to society until recent times.

What do we know? Let’s summarize.

1. **Summary of Tablet One:** Honor your Creator(s) of whom you were made in his image
  - a. First, honor and love God because He made the first humans in his image and desires to restore that lost relationship.
  - b. Second, since you were made in your parents’ image, honor them who partnered with God to bring you forth into the world.
2. **Summary of Tablet Two:** Honor your relationships with peers and others to restore God’s “likeness” in your behavior towards them.

When we weaken, excuse or remove a commandment, as some propose like the Sabbath commandment, we give license to others to invite the spirit of lawlessness to rule the day as it will be in the Last Days before the Great Day of Yahweh—*Yom Ha-Din* (the Day of Judgment).

But there’s more!

### **The Correspondence of the Ten Commandments from Tablet to Tablet**

Each commandment in order per first stone corresponds to the commandments in order etched in the second stone: 1 to 6, 2 to 7, 3 to 8, 4 to 9 and 5 to 10. Each correspondence between the two stones validates a spiritual principle of life regarding our Creator and others.

1. **Commandments One and Six:** Honoring the Right to Exist (Life)
2. **Commandments Two and Seven:** Honoring One True God and One True Spouse

3. **Commandments Three and Eight:** Honoring Ownership of Real Property
4. **Commandments Four and Nine:** Honoring Ownership of Intangible Property (Reputation)
5. **Commandments Five and Ten:** Honoring Other's Rights Beyond Your Own

If you remove one commandment on one tablet, such as principle four, you remove the corresponding one on the other tablet, principle nine.

### How Does the Fourth Commandment and the Ninth Commandment Correspond?

We shouldn't have difficulty understanding how all the commandments on the first tablet correspond to the other commandments, except perhaps with four and nine.

How does observing the Sabbath day (Exodus 20:8-11) correspond to the ninth commandment: "Do not bear false witness against your neighbor" (20:16).

Let's read all the words in English that pertain to the fourth commandment according to its Hebrew structure and design. The conventions of the alphabet with indentions are added to show the frame of the Hebrew narrative in English.

- A<sup>8</sup> "Remember the Sabbath day,
- B     to keep it holy [*qodesh* – "set apart"].
- A<sup>9</sup> "Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
- B     <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath of Yahweh your God.
  - a     You shall not do any work,
  - b         you or your son or your daughter,
  - c         your male or your female servant
  - d         or your cattle
  - e         or your sojourner who stays with you.
- A<sup>11</sup> "For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth,  
the sea and all that is in them.
- B<sup>1</sup>     And He rested on the seventh day.
- A<sup>1</sup>     Therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day
- B<sup>1</sup>     and He made it holy [*qodesh* – "set apart"].

Observe the correspondence of each line to another. A corresponds to A<sup>1</sup>. B corresponds to B<sup>1</sup>. The lower case letters show a sequence that is asymmetrical, common to lists in the Hebrew Bible.

Such an example illustrates the way the Hebrew Bible is written throughout in a well-conceived literary structure and design that features mostly symmetry with some asymmetry amidst it. Bear in mind that more is written in inspired Hebrew by the Spirit of God about the Sabbath than any other commandment. Yahweh sees it as no small matter for Israel to uphold.

Now let's look at the ninth commandment in this light: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." That's all it says.



The extra amount of ink and paper to explain the importance of the Sabbath helps us understand the correspondence between commandments four and nine. What we observe, or should at least, is that both commandments four and nine are about preserving the integrity of one's reputation.

In regard to the ninth commandment, we are not to bear false witness against another person. Those who do slanders his or her reputation, as in this case, in a court of law where justice is to be served.

But it matters not what the venue, courtroom or not. A person's reputation is his or her *intangible property* of priceless value and it should never be stolen or defamed by a false witness. Whereas commandments three and eight are about *tangible property*, commandments four and nine are about intangible property.

How does one bear false witness against Yahweh in the fourth commandment? For this is what the commandment is about—bearing false witness about the Creator. It is about defaming his reputation.

Let's approach the question this way. What if someone said the world wasn't created in seven days, that it is a result of evolution based on random selection? Would this be a false witness against the Creator?

Or what if someone advocated that the world was made in five days instead of seven? So what, someone may say? Does this really matter in the grand scheme of things?

You are aware that we measure time by different movements, mostly of the outer space variety. We have sidereal time (or star time), sun time and moon time. The speed of light, of course, is important to all three. The stars give us measurements of eons. The sun gives us our days and years. The moon gives us our months. Atomic time gives us exact time measurements in nano seconds.

So here's the question about God's reputation. Where do weeks come from? No natural, celestial or atomic reason explains seven days in a week.

We have 365 days in a year, twelve months in a year. The number 365, divisible by the seven days in a week, gives us a 52 weeks and a day to spare. What happened to the natural flow of measuring time by those lights that govern the skies? Seven days to a week is awkward to reconcile with our natural, created methods for measuring time.

Now this is easily corrected if we change the length of a week to five. It divides easily into 365 days, changing the length of weeks so they are reckoned by sun time.

Actually, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) attempted this experiment during the early day of Vladimir Lenin, its first dictator, an avowed atheist, persecutor of Jews and Christians. He convinced the League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations, to go along with the novelty. Russia was the grand experiment.

But it miserably failed. The human psyche couldn't bear with it. People worked ten days before a day off. Mental illness soared among the populace while productivity on the farms and in the factories plummeted. Lenin was compelled to concede his five day week with ten days of work a failure. Russia returned to the seven day week with a day off on the seventh day.

What happened was that the atheist dictator attempted to harm the reputation of Yahweh in a world court—the League of Nations. He brought false witness against Almighty God. He failed miserably when he disrupted the Sabbath day.

The Sabbath has no compelling reason from nature or science to be reckoned as it is as the seventh day. It simply fails to fit the scheme of measurable, objective things, whether the stars, the sun and its planetary system, the earth's moon, or the atomic clock.

When we face the truth about the Sabbath day as the seventh and last day of the week, we confess that it exists only because God said it was his day of rest from six days of creation.

All civilizations recognize seven days for a week from the earliest of civilization. Why? Because Yahweh set it in order. It has the soundness of his reputation as the world's Creator. To remove the Sabbath day and its significance for humanity is to bear false witness against the Creator who rested on the seventh day of his creation.

For this reason alone, we should allow the Sabbath day to bear witness to the world that Yahweh created the heavens and the earth in six days and the seventh day He rested.

### **The Sabbath is about Living Life to its Fullest**

Sabbath is the goal of the six days of work we do to nurture and sustain life. It is the satisfying day when work is ended and life is nurtured and sustained. It is paradise in sanctified time with God. It is Yahweh's day, as He declared it to be.

The Sabbath is not to be thought of as a day off from work, though we should cease creative work on that day alone. The goal of Sabbath is not to take a one day break for rest and relaxation to restore the mind and body, only to repeat itself after the next six days. Sure, taking a day off a week is restorative to our health and well-being. But the seventh day is unique and altogether set apart from the six days of work for more than to have a day off.

The goal of work is to achieve sufficiency for self and family during a six day period each passing week. The goal of the Sabbath day is to enter the state of rest for body and soul where life is lived to its fullness without effort to sustain it. The Sabbath day is the day we should enter without physical, material and physical concerns. For this reason, Jesus (Yeshua) healed on the Sabbath day to restore life to what it should be on this very day. The Sabbath is the ultimate goal of all the creative work we do.

### **The Sabbath is about Sanctified Time**

Let me propose something that you may or may not have thought about much before. The Sabbath is sanctified time. It is set apart from all other times of the week. "Set apart" is from the Hebrew word *qodesh* which also means "holy".

Look at Genesis 2:2-3 through its Hebraic literary symmetry expressed in English:

A<sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done,  
B and He rested on the seventh day from all his work which He had done.  
A<sup>1 3</sup> And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it,  
B<sup>1</sup> because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Do you see how A and A<sup>1</sup>, and B and B<sup>1</sup> correspond? It's rather easy to see. The Hebrew writers were amazing writers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to write with the structure and style that they did. The Judean Nazarene Writings of the Apostles, later known as the "New Testament", has the very same Hebraic literary structures and designs as does the Tanakh ("Old Testament").

God is holy. And He is the only One who can make something holy, *i.e.*, to sanctify something. The first thing God sanctified was time, but not all time. He only made the seventh day holy, separated from all other days of the week.

Bear in mind this was done from the beginning of creation. Millennia later the weekly Sabbath day became significant for Israel's identity upon being rescued from Egyptian slavery as they stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai when Yahweh gave Israel its national constitution, the Ten Commandments ("Principles").

When we think of all He could have sanctified first, we should be amazed that He chose to sanctify the seventh day of the week as separated from all the other days. His first sanctifying act was to sanctify time before He sanctified anything else He created.

Yahweh did not declare the heavens holy. He did not declare the earth holy. He did not declare the animals holy, not even those that later would be offered for sacrifices. No, they were clean animals, not holy animals. He didn't declare the Garden of Eden holy.

No, not at all. He declared nothing holy but the seventh and last day of the week until Israel was formed out of a nations of Egyptian slaves who were of the family of Jacob of Canaan, son of Isaac, son of Abraham.

Why would He sanctify time in this unique, eternal way?

### **Time and Space, the Essence of Creation**

Two things make up creation: time and space. You can't have created things without these two elements. God created both time and space so he could carve out the universe from eternity. The Jewish physicist, Albert Einstein, based his theories of general and special relativity on this premise.

Real time, unlike real space, is not manipulative by man. It is beyond man's control to change it. Time marches on. We can shape and reform space. Each moment of time is unique and unrepeatable.

We may rename the days of the week, or the names of the months, or give each year a certain name, or reclassify the day of the new year to something else, or put in place time zones, but real time marches on in spite of us according to the time measurements of the stars, sun and moon—and the atomic clock.

We do not control time. It controls us. We may only manage our time with the allotment we have of it during our own lifetime.

Space is different. We don't mean empty space—nothingness, but all things that exist visible and invisible. We mean the stuff of creation. Everything that exists takes up space.

In Hebrews 11:3, a well-spoken apostolic Judean Nazarene wrote:

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God,  
so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

After God created all things, time and space, He did not sanctify space. And He did not sanctify time, except for the time after creation was completed and declared “very good”.

The first time when space was sanctified by Yahweh was when the Tabernacle in the desert of Sinai was built and consecrated to Him as his dwelling place (*mishkan*) among the people of Israel. Yahweh sanctified the interior and called its two rooms the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Never before was space sanctified, and only then to acknowledge God's revelation and presence among his covenant people.

Even with the sanctification of space—the *mishkan*—it was subject to time, especially the Sabbath and the annual “appointed times”. “Holy space” was subjected to man's control, especially the priests and Levites of Israel.

Also, the tabernacle was subject to the elements of nature. It was a temporal, mobile dwelling place. In time it became permanent—the Temple in Jerusalem. Because it was space, it required repair. Holy time never requires repair by man. The Tabernacle (*mishkan*) was replaced by the Temple. Twice the Temple was destroyed. Since the second destruction it has not been rebuilt.

But the Sabbath and the seven annual “appointed times” continue as time, and the Sabbath as sanctified time.

Let's ask some questions of the Bible.

### **The Uniqueness of the Sabbath from the Other “Appointed Times”**

Why was the Sabbath listed first in Leviticus 23 as a weekly “appointed time” before the seven annual “appointed times” (*mo'edim*) were listed that Yahweh chose to meet with his covenant people Israel?

Answering this question is invaluable for the way all peoples of the nations should understand the Sabbath. Israel has a unique interest in weekly Sabbath observance to bear witness to the nations of the reputation of Yahweh as the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

Further, the weekly Sabbath is unlike all other “appointed times” of Yahweh that He set apart from the rest of the days of the year to meet with Israel.

In Leviticus 23 is listed the seven annual festivals (“appointed times”). They are invaluable to understand Yahweh’s revelation of Himself in time and space, within human history.

The weekly Sabbath and the seven annual “appointed times” are a continuous lesson to Israel and by Israel about Yahweh’s revelation of Himself to the covenant people and through Israel to the world. Salvation is of the Jews. These “set apart” days should never be ignored or treated by Israel with disobedience. They bear witness to Yahweh’s name, to his power to create the heavens and the earth, of his righteousness and justice in human affairs, and of his lovingkindness and faithfulness to all who call upon his name.

Embedded in the Sabbath and the seven annual “appointed times” is the Messianic promise of the Messiah. It makes Israel a nation without excuse in recognizing and knowing the Messiah. Its failure to do so harms not only Israel, but the hope of the nations of the earth. Israel has a solemn obligation to the nations of the earth to reveal the Messiah, something it did through the Judean Nazarene movement of the first century while others of the Jewish nation resisted his revelation.

The weekly Sabbath, as noted, is listed before the seven annual “appointed times” of Yahweh for Israel. One thing that makes it unique is that it is a weekly rather than an annual observance unlike the other “appointed times”.

Moreover, it is unique from the other “appointed times” because it is the one and only “appointed time” of Yahweh not dependent upon the phases of the moon.

### **How is Israel Connected to the Moon’s Phases?**

The visible moon from earth is a pattern of reflected light radiated from the sun across the face of the moon. It is not the sun, but it mirrors the light of the sun to earth for night light.

When the surface of the moon is examined through space, or by human visitation, it is a barren wasteland of dust and rocks. The truth of its light broadcast to night-time earth is not of its own source. We would not see the moon if not for the sun that enlightens it in the darkness of space.

Israel is attached to the light of Yahweh like the moon is to the sun. Israel is to radiate the light of Yahweh, and his Messiah, to the world. As the moon is a pattern of light shining from the reality of the sun’s light, so is Israel like the moon for Yahweh’s light of revelation.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) and his teachings remain highly admired today among the Jewish people. In his book, *Moadim Perspectives* (republished 2016), he connects Israel to the phases of light shining from the moon’s monthly cycle. Israel is understood to be a receptor and transmitter of the light of Yahweh and his Messiah as moon during earth’s

darkness. He says that Israel is like the moon to the sun as “the announcers of deliverance from darkness, from slavery to freedom, from death to life.”<sup>1</sup> He explains that “the renewal of the moon has always been considered as a symbol of the renewal of Israel.”<sup>2</sup>

To understand Israel then, the rabbi teaches, we must understand the relationship of the sun to the moon. All the annual “appointed times” occur according to the phases of the moon.

Israel, as we’ve established, is like the moon in its relationship to the sun. Whereas, the moon serves the earth as a pattern of light broadcast from the reality of the sun’s glory, Israel serves the nations as a pattern of light received from Yahweh to be transmitted to the nations of the earth as the light of the nations.

All annual “appointed times” occur within the first seven months of the biblical calendar (see Exodus 12). The first seven months are a week of months, the seventh month being a Sabbath month. Again, these seven months are reckoned by the position of the moon unlike the Sabbath.

### **The Sabbath is Never about the Moon**

When the moon is in certain positions during the first seven months of the biblical year, then we know the time when each festival begins and ends according to its “appointed time”.

But here is where the pattern about the Sabbath day *contrasts* with the Messianic patterns of the seven annual “appointed times” of Yahweh.

- The moon determines when the “appointed times” are observed
- The weekly Sabbath is determined by the seventh day of the week

Said another way, the weekly Sabbath is a “set apart” day whose “light” is not about light reflected by the moon. Its light shines from eternity when God rested after finishing his creation of the heavens and the earth.

The Sabbath, the weekly “appointed time”, is absolutely *independent* of the moon, the sun, the stars, or anything else that was created. The Sabbath day of Yahweh’s rest in Genesis 2:1-3 is separated from the space-time continuum—the stuff of creation. Yahweh blessed it and made it into an eternal day of sanctified time.

Meanwhile, the weekly Sabbath Israel observes is a pattern or shadow of the eternal day of sanctified time, what the Bible refers to as “Today”. This Sabbath exists in eternity which the good news of Jesus (Yeshua) is an invitation to enter “Today”. It is the day of the eternal dwelling of Yahweh—the eternal Sabbath rest that we are invited to enter into through faith in and obedience to the Messiah of Israel. For this reason, when we believe in Him and enter his eternal rest, we enjoy the promise of eternal life.

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<sup>1</sup> Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, Rav Saloman Breuer, Rav Joseph Breuer, *Moadim Perspectives: Pesach-Shavuot* (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2016), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., see footnote, 5.

Consider, then, that both the regular weekly Sabbath and the High Holy Sabbaths assigned to three of the seven annual “appointed times” are signs and shadows of the eternal Sabbath day where God dwells and invites us to come and rest in Him.

Meanwhile, the High Holy Sabbaths, because they are signs and shadows, patterns and copies of the true Sabbath, are dependent upon the moon’s position. The moon is a sign of Israel as the receiver and transmitter of heaven’s light. The “appointed times” of Yahweh given to Israel to observe tell the nations that the reality of all things is in the Messiah.

Colossians 2:16-17 records the teachings of the Apostle Paul on the subject:

- A Therefore, no one is to act as your judge
- B . . .
  - a in regard to [*offerings of*] food or drink,
  - b or in respect to [*observance of*] an “appointed time”,
  - c or a new moon,
  - d or a [*weekly*] Sabbath day—
- B<sup>1</sup> things which are a shadow [*tzel*] of what is to come.
- A<sup>1</sup> For the substance [*of these things*] belongs to the Messiah [*i.e., He is their reality*].

The Judean Nazarene writer of the Letter to the Hebrews explains:

- A For the Torah, being a shadow [*tzel*] of the coming good things—
- B not the very form [*tzelem* – “image”] of the things every year,
- B<sup>1</sup> [*nor*] in the same offerings that they offer continually—
- A<sup>1</sup> never is able to make perfect those coming near ... (10:1)

The shadow cast by the Torah is not the reality. The reality is the fullness of the shadow found only in the Messiah of Israel.

It’s all in the patterns of reality. If we don’t know the patterns, we don’t understand the reality when it appears in fullness. The patterns help us to know the reality when He came, and when He comes again. Without the patterns we could be deceived by another gospel.

We should reckon with the reality that Yahweh taught the people of Israel in patterns, parables, and shadows of reality. They help us from being deceived.

Everything about Israel should be projected as a pattern revealing a reality about the Messiah. He moved Israel’s history and presence in the world along, connected to the nation’s prophetic existence, its role as the depository of God’s Word, its observation of the “appointed times”, and its obedience to Yahweh’s commands.

Israel is Yahweh’s treasury of the patterns, parables and prophecies of the Messianic revelation of Yahweh in time and space.

As repeated again, these patterns and shadows of reality are not the reality themselves. Torah observance by Israel of the patterns and shadows of Yahweh from eternity bears testimony to the nations about the importance and significance of Israel. Without Israel the nations are lost.

Salvation is of the Jews. When Israel is faithful to observe the patterns and shadows of God's revelation, the Jewish people rehearse and recite the truth before the nations what is revealed in the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua).

Israel is Yahweh's human paintbrush of the Messiah's reality on the canvas of time and space. No other nation has such a role or purpose, but, rather, instead, are the chosen recipients of the divine portrait of the Messiah embedded in the life and times of Israel according to God's Word.

Let's summarize:

1. In Leviticus 23, as stated, the "appointed times" of Yahweh are listed that He chose to meet with Israel. The Sabbath day precedes all seven "appointed times" Yahweh set for Himself to meet with Israel as a separate, weekly time.
2. The teaching of Genesis 2:1-3 is that the Sabbath is "Yahweh's day" for Him to rest. When He created man in the middle of the afternoon on the sixth day, He invited him—male and female—to rest with Him on this day set from his position in eternity, not from his created world of created things. Thus, it is an eternal rest—a day without measure—not reckoned by the stars, sun and moon. From ancient times in Israel the Sabbath was understood as an eternal day called "Today". The weekly Sabbath serves as a pattern of this eternal day.
3. The "appointed times" of Leviticus 23 are connected to space and time for its reality, excepting the weekly Sabbath, a pattern of the eternal Sabbath.
4. All annual "appointed times" are associated with the moon as a time measurement, a portrait of Israel's unique identity among the nations as the receiver of Yahweh's revelation in history, and the transmitter of his revelation to the nations.
5. The Sabbath day of Genesis 2:1-3 in the first creation account isn't about a "pattern" of reality, as the "appointed times". It is reality of holy time in the light of the Messiah.

### **Mining the Bible's Teachings on the Sabbath**

We've addressed a lot already. What follows will restate much of what is already addressed, but will tweak it further to mine the meaning and value of the seventh day of the week.

For clarity sake, in modern Judaism are two main Hebrew dialects. The biblical word for Sabbath is *Shabbath*. The Sephardic Jew says *Shabbat* (almost silencing, if not, the "h" sound) and the Ashkenazi Jew would say *Shabbas*, changing the "th" sound at the end of the word to "s".

As understand universally, the regular week-day Sabbath on the biblical calendar falls on the seventh day of each week.

Sabbaths, interestingly, are not restricted to the seventh day of the week. Three times a year a High Sabbath occurs during three of the seven annual "appointed times" (*mo'edim*). High Sabbaths are archetypal of the seventh day of creation—the day God rested from the work of creating the heavens and the earth (cf. Genesis 2:1-3).

Throughout the Bible, the regular Sabbath and High Sabbaths were days to be filled with wonder and awe of the fear of Yahweh. They prompted Messianic reflection. They were days where rest provided the opportunity to gain God's wisdom into the purpose of life in light of the creation of



man (*ha-adam*) in God's image (*tzelem*) and likeness (*demuth*). On the Sabbath was comfort and rest in the promises of God (*Elohim*) in the Messiah, the fullness of the *Shabbath shabbathon* ("the Sabbath rest").

### **An Overview of Bible References**

The first record of the Sabbath is found in Genesis 2:2. Everything about the Sabbath flows from it for understanding.

In Hebrew, two words mean "rest", *shavath* and *nuach*. The difference is not subtle. *Nuach* means "rest" in the sense of comfort, consolation, renewal and refreshment. The name of Noah (Noah) is from the same root Hebrew verb. The idea is to be consoled and to restore one's vigor.

The Hebrew word *shavath*, from which we get our word "Sabbath", means to cease labor, end effort, to desist from work or occupation, to stop working and bring the creative activities of life to a standstill. It is the time to stop thinking about yourself and your activities that you do for six days straight.

Whereas we spend six days of work for our benefit, wringing out of creation all that we can to support our lives and lifestyles, on the seventh day we cease that objective. We shift focus from ourselves and the work-related activities of daily life, for a higher purpose.

In reference to the Sabbath rest, the idea is cessation of work for a higher, elevated purpose and heightened awareness of the holy that may not occur when work is being done, when we are striving over work and the rewards it brings, or even when one is simply resting and relaxing (*nuach*). An hour on a couch resting your body, whether asleep or before a television set, is not a mini-Sabbath.

Sabbath is about entrance into holy time with God.

The Hebrew word *nuach* has a kind of kinship with work because it is rest for the sake of a personal, physical benefit. *Shavath* is not about self and what self needs. It is altogether *relational*.

*Nuach*, like work, is for physical, mental and emotional rest and relaxation—resting a tired and worn body from hard work.

*Shavath* is altogether *spiritual*. It is about a spiritual relationship with God and one's family, including friends and neighbors. It is about a heightened awareness of life, of life in the spirit as we were made to live in the image and likeness of God.

### **"Sabbath" in the Bible**

In the Judean Nazarene Writings of the Apostles (*Ketuvim ha-Netzarim ha-Shlichim*), i.e., what became known during the third century A.D. under the gentile-led, Greco-Roman Church as the "New Testament", the word "Sabbath" occurs 61 times, almost as many times as in the *Tanakh*,

or “Old Testament”. The Gospels make 50 references, the Book of Acts nine, Colossians once (2:16) and Hebrews once (4:9).

The writer of Hebrews, writes of the spiritual, relational “rest” God designed for his people to enter into through faithful obedience to Him in this life. This is known as the *Shabbat shabbathon*, or Sabbath rest. Its fullness is in the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua).

The first biblical occurrence of the word “Sabbath” [*shabbath*] is in Exodus 16:22-30 where it reads:

And on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one.

When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, then he said to them, “This is what Yahweh meant: Tomorrow is a *shabbathon* [“complete rest”], a holy *shabbath* to Yahweh. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.”

So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it.

Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a *shabbath* to Yahweh. Today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, and on the seventh [*shevi’i*] day—*shabbath*, there will be none.”

It came about on the seventh [*shevi’i*] day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.

Then Yahweh said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep my commandments and my instructions? See, Yahweh has given you the *shabbath*. Therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. You sit [*shavu* – also, “you rest”] every man down where he stands [*tachath*]. Let no man go out of his standing place [*maqom*] on the seventh [*shevi’i*] day.”

So the people rested [*yishebbeth*] on the seventh [*shevi’i*] day.

Did the chosen, covenant people of Yahweh understand that the Sabbath was spiritual and relational with God and family?

Yes and no. Some did who heard. Some didn’t who didn’t listen. It’s the same today. Some never enter into that spiritual, relational rest with the Creator reserved for God’s people through faithful obedience to Him, even as it was in Israel’s exodus journey from Egypt under Moses’ leadership.

### **Concept of *Shabbath Shabbathon*—“Sabbath Rest”**

We are introduced to several concepts related to the Sabbath [*shabbath*]. The word *shabbath* occurs in singular and plural references in the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) 78 times, eleven of which

includes a combination of *shabbath* with the word *shabbathon*, plainly translated as “Sabbath rest”.

Some translations render the two words as “Sabbath observance” instead of “Sabbath rest”. Though acceptable in the sense it infers obedience to a commandment (*mitzvoth*), the stronger, clearer meaning, of course, is “Sabbath rest” (*Shabbath shabbathon*).

Sabbath observance comes from another Hebrew word than the phrase *Shabbath shabbathon*. The word in Hebrew for observance is *shamar* (“to keep, guard, protect, observe”). Sabbath observance is about “keeping” and “guarding” the Sabbath as the given sign of Yahweh’s covenant with Israel when, at Mt. Sinai, Yahweh called his chosen people to become his nation among all the nations of the earth. Guarding the Sabbath day is Israel’s national duty, for in it is the identity of Israel confirmed and shaped.

The idea was for the covenant people of God rescued from Egypt to meet with Yahweh at Mt. Sinai as a separated (“holy”) nation to guard, keep, and become unrelenting in holding firm to the ideal of what the Shabbath is intended to be—holy time separated from our preoccupation with things as we enter into a devoted spiritual relationship with God based on his covenant with the nation of Israel.

The Sabbath as a covenant sign of God with Israel as his chosen people was not done for the nations of the earth, but only for Israel. The Sabbath belongs to Israel as the sign of its covenant relationship with God as the separated people of God.

In all instances in the Scriptures where the word *shabbathon* appears, it indicates “resting,” “rest,” or, better, “complete rest”. It means to cease from what the activities we do physically and materially for our sake and, instead, be in a state of contented rest with our Maker, undistracted from the things we preoccupy ourselves with of creation.

The private, undistracted time of husband and wife enjoying each other’s company is a valid picture to understand the Sabbath day better. The comparison is true. The last section of the first creation account of Genesis 1:-2:3 ends with the Sabbath as Yahweh’s holy time. The last section of the second creation account of Genesis 2:4-25 ends with the marriage of man and woman, becoming one (*echad*), naked and unashamed.

Both creation accounts correspond to each other in a wonderful and beautiful literary way in the Hebrew language of its telling. Genesis 1 and 2 give us two accounts, one from eternity’s view and the other from the view of earth (see Genesis 2:4). The Sabbath of Yahweh at the end of the first creation account is about inviting mankind into eternal rest with Him. The marriage of man and woman is about entering an undistracted temporal relationship where work is put off for the intimacy of a husband and wife relationship.

In the Bible, usually the word *shabbathon* does not stand alone, but is tied to the word *shabbath* as *shabbath shabbathon*—a “Sabbath of complete, spiritual, intimate, obedient rest.”

The eleven occurrences of the word *shabbathon* occur only in two books of the Torah, in Exodus (three times) and Leviticus (eight times). The occasions are in reference to:

- The regular Sabbath on the seventh day of each week (*cf.* Exodus 16:23; 31:15; 35:2; Leviticus 23:3)
- High Sabbaths during the three “appointed times” in the seventh month, known as Tishrei, namely, *Yom Teruah* (Day of Awakening Trumpet Blast), *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) and *Sukkoth* (Booths, or Tabernacles) (*cf.* Leviticus 23:24, 32, 39)
- The sabbatical year for agriculture (*cf.* Leviticus 25:4-5)

In every case, when we encounter the phrase *shabbath shabbathon*, we should read it as “Sabbath rest.” As we shall see later, this understanding prepares us to understand the teaching on the Sabbath in Hebrews 4. In these eleven citations, the word *shabbath* [Sabbath] connects to *shabbathon* [“complete rest”] as a holistic phras. They are entwined together.

### Sabbath and Seven

The connection of the word “Sabbath” to the Hebrew number “seven” as the seventh day of the week is obvious to most serious Bible students.

A quick reading of Exodus 16:29-30 is sufficient. Moses speaks to the newborn nation of Israel:

“See, Yahweh has given you the Sabbath [*ha-Shabbath*].  
Therefore, He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day.  
You rest [*sh’vu*, from *yashav* – “to sit, abide, dwell, rest”] every man in his place.  
Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.”

And the people rested [*vay-yishb’thu*, from *shavath*] on the seventh [*sh’vi’i*] day.

In this passage, we find the word *sh’vu* which means “you sit, dwell, abide, rest, remain”). Hence, we see Yahweh’s command was for the people of Israel “to sit down” and “abide” on the Sabbath in Yahweh’s presence as a family in spiritual relationship with Him. He is Israel’s King, Israel’s husband in covenant relationship with his bride, the nation of Israel.

For the Jewish believer in the Messiah of Israel, Jesus (Yeshua) of Nazareth, we are reminded of his sayings:

**Matthew 11:28** – “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest [*yashav*].”

**John 15:4** – “Abide [*sh’vu*] in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides [*sh’vu*] in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide [*sh’vu*] in Me.”

**John 15:6-7** – “If anyone does not abide [*sh’vu*] in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up. And they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide [*sh’vu*] in Me, and my words abide [*sh’vu*] in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

**John 15:9** – “As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you: abide [*sh’vu*] in my love.”

The Sabbath draws our attention to the number seven in the Bible. The number seven connects to the idea of “sitting down, resting, abiding, remaining, dwelling.”

As mentioned, the word “Sabbath” is the Hebrew word *shabbath*. It was derived from the number seven—*sheva*—as found in Genesis 2:1-3—the seventh day when God rested from his work.

Seven is a fascinating number to study throughout the Bible. Generally it refers to the spiritual completion, including the state of rest of the natural order of God’s creation.

Seven relates to the idea of wholeness, completion and healing. In Israel, when a person was infected with a skin disease, such as an itch or rash, including leprosy, he or she went into isolation for seven days. The priest examined [*ra’ah* – “to see,” “to look at”] the infected person on the seventh day to declare the infected person either clean [*tahor*] and whole, or unclean [*tamei*] and still diseased (cf. Leviticus 13:32).

The matter of one’s cleanness or uncleanness, wellness or unhealthiness, was pronounced by the priest. He either qualified or disqualified a person by his examination. If the person was declared clean and whole, he or she could approach the holy things of God such as the Tent of Meeting [*mishkan*], and later, the Temple. If he or she remained sick, they were disallowed.

If you were the sick person and you were declared clean by the priest on the seventh day, your relationship with God would be exponentially enhanced. Even if on the sixth day the skin appeared healed, you remained unclean until the seventh day and the priest’s declaration. You would become more personal, even, intimate in your approach and worship of God, casting yourself on his mercy and lovingkindness rather than your earning power, or sense of merit.

The seventh day was the decisive day to know if one was whole or not. The Sabbath has this sense about it—it is the day of wholeness and healing of humanity.

For this reason, we see many of the references to the Sabbath in the Gospels to be the day Yeshua (Jesus) worked miracles and healed the sick. This purpose was lost on some of the Torah scholars during Yeshua’s ministry on earth, but not all. Many Pharisees, for example, believed that healing on the Sabbath was appropriate. Some did not. Those who didn’t, forgot the purpose of the Sabbath to include wellness of the body—as an appropriate time to heal and set free, to make things right and just.

Yeshua (Jesus) acted in accordance with the purpose of the Sabbath when He healed the sick and cast out demons.

Even today, Rabbinic Judaism, the descendants of the Pharisees, recognize the legitimacy of healing on the Sabbath. The Bridgeport Community Kollel through Feldheim Publishers released the book, *Refuah Sheleima: Concise Guide to the Laws of Healing on Shabbos* (2016) to be instructive to Orthodox Jews about healing on the Sabbath day.

Many things in the Bible are related to the number seven besides the seventh day of the week or the seven annual festivals (“appointed times”) found in Leviticus 23.

- The menorah that stood in the Tent of Meeting [*mishkan*] had seven lamps yielding a complete revelation of light. Six branches were fixed to one central stem. The seventh light, or central stem, gave the six branches their fullness.
- The food of Egypt, often associated with hard labor of God's people, was listed in the Bible as six items: fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic (Numbers 11:5). Yahweh's provision of food for Israel was listed as seven items: wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey (*cf.* Deuteronomy 8:8).
- In Ephesians 6:14-18, the protective armor of God worn by believers in the Messiah consists of six items: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of the preparedness of the gospel message, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. All these speak of putting on the Messiah in our relationship to an unfaithful world. A seventh appears in the list, but it is not something worn as protective armor, but, rather, is a daily practice of the armored believer. What is this seventh? The answer is prayer in the Spirit. Praying in the Spirit is to be done on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. The six items that clothe the follower of Messiah in an opposing world hang on a seventh—a holy, spiritual, personal and intimate relationship with Almighty God based on praying in the Spirit in the spiritual likeness of Messiah Jesus (Yeshua).

The seventh day was the “set apart” (“holy”) day on God's calendar after creation was completed in six days as a holy day of rest. Yahweh God designated the seventh day as one of his “appointed times” [*mo'edim*], along with the seven annual festivals in Leviticus 23.

During these “appointed times” Yahweh chooses to reveal Himself more completely, intensely and intimately as compared to all other days. They bear a prophetic value for their participants.

### **Sabbath Significance for Man**

The first six days show the works of God in relationship to man, and mankind's work in relation to God, others and the world. The seventh day was designed for man to relate to God without other concerns and distractions on his part. It was a meeting time. More than this, it was a sitting, abiding and resting time.

Jesus (Yeshua) said, “Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). Sabbath is for the benefit of man to rest in spiritual intimacy with Yahweh, and particularly for Israel as a sign of his covenant with Israel. Sabbath is not a legal statute imposed on man with a system of regulations and rules to stifle or control man. Rather, it was for our being set free from the past with rest for today and hope for the future. He did not say to the Judean people of the covenant that it was an option, or worse, there is no Sabbath to keep.

In one sense, the command to Israel to keep the Sabbath is like a hurricane or typhoon warning for a coastland in a direct path of destruction. You may choose to remain hunkered down to ride out the storm at high risk to you and your family. Wisdom says that you should take heed and evacuate to a safe place with your family. In an evacuation you leave your familiar setting where your job and livelihood is no more your primary concern. Those things are no longer so valuable and important. Rather, you retreat to a safe place for the safety and blessing of your family.

The Sabbath day is a safe place for the people of Israel. But it is so much more than an evacuation from the six days of work. It is eagerly anticipated no matter how good the work days may seem, how important they may be, how profitable they are. It is a day to be with Yahweh together with your family, if possible.

In fact, the Sabbath day is not a day of our choosing or setting. It was the day set by Yahweh for all Israel.

In Leviticus 23:1-3 the Torah describes the seventh day as “an appointed time” [*mo’ed*] Yahweh chose to invite his people Israel to convene together to recite the Scriptures and rehearse his relationship with them. A literal reading of this passage reads as follows:

Yahweh spoke again to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘Yahweh’s appointed times [*mo’adei*] which you shall proclaim as a holy recital [*miqrei*]—‘my appointed times [*mo’ada*] are these: For six days work may be done, but the seventh [*shavi’i*] day is a Sabbath [*shabbath*] of complete rest [*shabbathon*], a holy recital [*miqra*]. You shall not do any work. It is a Sabbath to Yahweh in all your resting places [*moshavathekem*, from *moshav* derived from the verb *yashav* – “to sit, abide, rest”].”

### **Sabbath as Rehearsal**

Besides the word “Sabbath” and its related meanings to the number seven emphasizing “rest” and “resting places,” two other words are very important in this passage for consideration. These two words are *mo’ed*, which means “an appointed time,” and *miqra*, which may be rendered as “a recital, reading, summons, calling, invitation, convocation” or, in broad terms, “a rehearsal.”

As stated, the noun *mo’ed* means “an appointed time.” Often it is translated as the word “feast,” but this is not always found true. For example, the sixth of the seven festivals is Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement. For Israel it is a fast day, a day to afflict oneself, not a feast day.

“Appointed time” gets at the heart of the meaning better. Some of the appointed times are celebrated like festivals. But we know that one is not to be thought of in terms of a feast, but rather the absence of one due to the loss of appetite of the nation because of its sin in the face of God’s holiness. Whenever we hear of “the seven festivals” of Yahweh, we need to recall that they are actually Yahweh’s “appointments” to meet with the people of Israel.

*Mo’ed* comes from the Hebrew verb *ya’ad* which means “to appoint,” or “to assign.” The same word in Arabic means “to promise,” “to threaten” and “to predict,” *i.e.*, it has to do with a present reality that concerns the future, both good and bad.

Appointments and assignments are future-oriented, as are promises, threats and predictions. They are made in the present, but carried out in the future. Such is the idea that lies behind the word *mo’ed*. It has a present reality to be expressed and experienced, but it is worked out in a prophetic way for the future.

As we know, of the seven “appointed times” of Yahweh that are annually commemorated, the first four are already fulfilled in the Messiah:

- Passover (*Pesach*)
- Unleavened Bread (*HaMatzot*)
- Firstfruits (*Bikurrim*)
- Pentecost (*Shavuot*)

They were fulfilled in the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua) at “the appointed times” [*mo’edim*]. The apostle Paul, in Romans 5:6 verified this truth: “For in our still being weak, the Messiah at the appointed time [*’eth* – spelled *ayin-tav*] died for the ungodly” (*cf.* similar usage of *’eth* in 1 Samuel 18:19, Ezekiel 7:7, 12; Isaiah 13:22). We see the synonymous parallelism of the Hebrew word *’eth* and *mo’ed* in Psalm 102:13:

You are arising and are showing compassion on Zion.  
For it is time [*’eth*] to be gracious to her,  
for the appointed time [*mo’ed*] has come.

The remaining three appointed times [*mo’edim*] all fall in the seventh month of Tishrei on God’s calendar. They are:

- *Yom Teruah* (Day of the Awakening Trumpet Blast)
- *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement)
- *Sukkoth* (Booths, or Tabernacles)

None of these last three “appointed times” are fulfilled yet in the Messiah. We await their fulfillment. Meanwhile, we have the promise of their fulfillment.

A related noun to *mo’ed* is the word *’ed* (spelled *ayin-daleth*). It means a confirming of evidence by virtue of being a witness, as in a court. The judge acts on the evidence to determine the future course of action based on the witnesses statements.

Another related word derived from *ya’ad* (“to appoint”) is *’edah*, which means “appointed meeting, congregation, assembly”. It is one of two Hebrew words that gentile Christianity adapted to define the word “church”.

The relationship is easily seen in the fact that a congregation, or assembly, gathers at an appointed time. In Leviticus 23, the Sabbath and the seven annual feasts are shown to be Yahweh’s appointed times with his people Israel. We do well to always remember that Yahweh set the appointed times for Himself. He calls them “my appointed times.”

As his people, Israel is obligated to respond to Yahweh’s invitation, or summons, to meet together with Him at his appointed times to weigh the present against the promised future of the Day of Yahweh, in English, “the Day of the LORD.”

The writer of the Book of Hebrews was a Judean Nazarene with apostolic authority. Tradition attributes the letter the Apostle Paul, but this is in doubt by many scholars over the past 150



years. Whoever he may be, he gives this admonition to the Judean congregations: “Let us not give up meeting together ... but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

Preserved is the idea that congregations of the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) meet at appointed times to recite the evidence of Yahweh’s promise regarding the present and to encourage each other for the future event of the Day of Yahweh.

The other word that bears weight for our brief study is the word *miqra*, which means “a recital.” The word “rehearsal” captures the spirit of the word.

Often translated in our Bibles as “convocation” or “assembly,” like the word *mo’ed*, it, too, bears witness to the future revelation of Yahweh to his people as they gather together to face the present reality of their circumstances.

Yet it means more, carrying along the idea of teaching and learning the Scriptures on how to live today in light of the approaching revelation of God to Israel and the nations, including the climactic Day of Yahweh.

The word *miqra* may be translated as the place of “recital,” “reading” (of the Scriptures) or “a calling together.” The purpose was to teach the Scriptures and learn from them. Derived from the Hebrew verb *qara’*, it means “to call,” or “to invite” to participate in a holy event.

In ancient Israel, the related word *qeru’im* was used to designate “those called up” to read from the Torah at public meetings. Another related verb *qarai’* meant “to teach” the Scriptures. In this light we see that the appointed times of Yahweh were also rehearsal times, that each *mo’ed* was also a *miqra*, and vice versa.

### **The Sabbath Reveals the Messiah**

What we learn is that weekly Sabbath observances as Yahweh’s appointed times for Israel had the intended value of being “a rehearsal,” or “recital.”

What was rehearsed, or intended to be rehearsed was the anticipation of the Messiah as the fullness of the Sabbath rest. He was the goal of the Sabbath observances. Sabbath and the Messiah are inseparable, the Sabbath pointing to Him and being fulfilled in Him. He is Lord of the Sabbath (*cf.* Luke 6:5)—one of his titles. And He is the fullness of its purpose and role in our lives.

### **Reverse Symmetry of Leviticus 23:1-4**

The synonymous parallelism of *mo’ed* (“appointed time”) and *miqra* (“recital,” “rehearsal”) may be shown in the literary style of Leviticus 23:1-4. These four verses conform to a Hebraic literary style we refer to as reverse symmetry.

Words and phrases conform to a symmetrical pattern that moves along a series of statements, then reverses its order at a pivotal word or statement that is the crux statement, or main point.

For example, if we assign letters of the alphabet to each succeeding line in Leviticus 23:1-4 we get a reverse symmetry that may be written as ABCDED<sup>1</sup>C<sup>1</sup>BA<sup>1</sup>. Examine the following verses in this light:

*Framing statement*

Yahweh spoke again to Moses, saying:

- A "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'Yahweh's appointed times [mo'adei]  
 B which you shall proclaim as a holy recital [miqrei]—  
 C 'my appointed times [mo'adai] are these:  
 D 'For six days work may be done, but the seventh [shavi'i] day is a Sabbath [shabbath] of complete rest [shabbathon – "resting"],  
 E 'a holy recital [miqra].  
 D<sup>1</sup> 'You shall not do any work—it is a Sabbath to Yahweh in all your resting places [moshavathekem, from moshav derived from shav].  
 C<sup>1</sup> 'These are the appointed times [mo'adei] of Yahweh,  
 B<sup>1</sup> holy recitals [miqra'ei]  
 A<sup>1</sup> which you shall proclaim for them at the appointed times [mo'adam]."

Lines A and A<sup>1</sup>, the first and last lines of this passage, are in parallel correspondence as are all other succeeding letters B, C and D with their counterparts.

However, observe that line E is without a parallel. It is a pivotal statement upon which all other words and phrases hinge—like a door hinge that swings a door open and back again in reverse order. Line E simply is two words— holy *miqra*, meaning "a holy recital." It is "the call of Yahweh to rehearse before Him" using the Scriptures to learn the ways of Yahweh so our future may conform to his plan for the ages.

The importance of detecting the Hebraic literary style underlying our English translations of the Bible is critically important in biblical interpretation. Once we know the actual literary method used for writing a passage we can clarify meanings and intentions of the writer when using certain words. In lines D and D<sup>1</sup>, for example, the text reads:

- D "For six days work [melakah] may be done, but the seventh [shavi'i] day is a Sabbath [shabbath] of complete rest [shabbathon – "resting"]."  
 D<sup>1</sup> "You shall not do any work [melakah]; it is a Sabbath to Yahweh in all your resting places [moshavathekem, from moshav derived from yashav – "to sit, abide, rest"]."

The word "work" corresponds exactly in the same section in both lines. We have a chiastic structure here that is in reverse symmetry.

When we look at the symmetry and asymmetry in a chiastic literary structure, so common to the Hebrew Bible, we become informed of additional information we would know otherwise. Not only is the word "work" in lines D and D<sup>1</sup>, so is the word *shabbath* in both lines.

In line D, the last word is *shabbathon*, meaning "rest," or "complete rest."

In line D<sup>1</sup> the word is *moshavatheken*, meaning “your resting places,” like your home where you live, eat and sleep. The word *moshav*, from which this word is expanded, means “sitting place, abiding place, resting place.”

Both words emphasize resting. The word in line D<sup>1</sup>, *shabbathon*, is joined to the preceding word *shabbath* to be read as *shabbath shabbathon*. Eleven times this word combination exists in the Torah, principally in Exodus and Leviticus. It means “Sabbath of complete rest,” or, in shorter form, “Sabbath rest.” The word *moshavathekem*, meaning “your resting places,” shifts the emphasis from the purpose of the Sabbath to be a day of rest to the place where one rests on the Sabbath.

As we shall see, the writer of Hebrews in chapter 4 refers to Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) as both the *shabbath shabbathon*, the “Sabbath rest,” and *moshav*, “resting place,” or “sitting place.”

The expression that “Yeshua is our Sabbath rest” is not totally lost on us today, thanks to the passage in Hebrews 4.

Nor is the idea that we sit in heavenly places in the Messiah lost to us. In Ephesians 2:6-9, the apostle Paul wrote:

And God raised us up with Messiah and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Messiah Yeshua . . . For it is by lovingkindness you have been saved through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

What is lost to many is the connection of Yeshua (Jesus) as our “sitting place, abiding place, resting place” and its reference to the action we take in our Sabbath rest.

What the Judean Nazarenes of the first century taught as shown in the New Testament is that we enter into our Sabbath rest (*shabbath shabbathon*) through faith in the Messiah Yeshua, resting from our works in this life. We now “sit,” *i.e.*, “rest” ourselves in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua.

How can we enter the Sabbath rest as if it were always “today”? This is a driving point made by the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews. It is possible. Today is the Sabbath day. But how? What Hebrew teaching about this was so well understood that the writer did not have to elaborate as to what he meant?

**The Sabbath was made for man’s rest in Messiah.** We gain insight, and hopefully revelation of the Word of God, by recalling that the seventh day is highly important for our having a better understanding and relationship with Yahweh. As we’ve learned, the number seven as related to the Sabbath has to do with teaching us something not only about God, but ourselves, not only about ourselves, but about God.

We learn that we are incomplete in ourselves, falling short, like the number six is the number of man’s incompleteness and corruption. We cannot bring about our cleanness and wholeness by our merits or works. We may try to bring about our reform, a fresh start or rebirth, but all our efforts gloomily fail to achieve this goal. Our most noble efforts and resolve collapses on the

dust pile of human strivings. Our works are insufficient for the task of transformation. Therefore, we either remain hopelessly lost in an aimless life thinking we are the center of the world, or we give up on our works and enter into the divine rest from our inadequate, corruptible ways by participating in the life of the risen Messiah, out Sabbath rest.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews drilled this point in 4:1-11. He taught that believers in the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) now enter the Sabbath rest by faith demonstrated, not in abstract faith, but obedient faith—faith that is demonstrable.

Such is not hope deferred, but experience attained in the Messiah.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews warned about the failures of others in the past who, having heard the gospel, did not combine their hearing with faith in the Messiah. Because of their disobedience they remained stuck in their six day existence focused on time and space—on the stuff of this world. Their Sabbath observances were in vain. They failed to enter the complete rest available in this life—a daily, permanent, on-going rest based on a faith relationship with God in Messiah.

This is the *shabbathon* referred to eleven times in Exodus and Leviticus—the complete rest available now through faith in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus).

Then, in his remarkable *midrash* (commentary) on the Sabbath, the writer of Hebrews refers to Yahweh's promise to Moses at Mt. Sinai where Yahweh said to him: "My Presence will go with you [singular], and I will give you rest [singular]" (Exodus 33:14).

Joshua enlarged the saying from referring only to Moses to include all of Israel when they possessed the land. The writer of Hebrew says this did not happen. And, of course, it didn't. The first generation of the new nation of Israel did not enter the promised rest of the Sabbath due to disobedience. They defined their lives by their work, by their six days of time/space activity, not by resting from their works on the seventh day.

The writer of Hebrew adds: "Therefore God again set a certain day calling it 'Today'" (Hebrews 4:7), offering a new opportunity for Israel to enter the Sabbath rest, the *shabbath shabbathon*. He wrote:

There remains, then, a Sabbath rest [*shabbath shabbathon*] for the people of God. For anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience (4:9-11).

**The Sabbath rest, or *shabbath shabbathon*, is "Today."** The writer of Hebrews tells his Judean audience of believers in Messiah that Sabbath observance for Sabbath observance sake leads to failure. What matters is entering permanently into the Sabbath rest—the *shabbath shabbathon* through faith in Jesus (Yeshua). This is the purpose for which the Sabbath day was intended—to point to the revelation of the Messiah and the rest—the only true rest—that is available only through faith in Him.

“Today” is the day we participate in the divine nature of the Messiah. When we receive Jesus (Yeshua) by faith in Him, we enter into the seventh day of God’s plan for us, a spiritual day that separates us from our time/space works, the six days of our past where we depended on our performance.

The Apostle Peter summarized well the fullness of the Sabbath rest we have in the Messiah:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our experiential knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (2 Peter 1:3).

Corruption in the world caused by evil desires is a six days a week experience, the common experience of instinctual man. Participation in the divine nature of the Messiah is the fullness of the Sabbath experience, a ‘Today’ experience of fully resting in Him as the majestic man.

When the writer of Hebrews used the word “Today,” he showed that we do not leave the *shabbath shabbathon* (Sabbath rest) to begin another work week tomorrow. Instead, we sit in the heavenly realm in Messiah Yeshua now—and all our tomorrows without self-dependency on our performance and achievements.

### **The Sabbath as the Sign of Yahweh’s Covenant with Israel**

Every covenant Yahweh makes has a sign given to it to help us recall the terms of each covenant. The Noachic Covenant Yahweh made with Moses had the rainbow as its sign. Yahweh said to Noah:

This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth” (Genesis 9:12-12).

The sign of the covenant God made with Abraham was circumcision of males. In Genesis 17:11 Yahweh said: “You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.”

The sign of the covenant Yahweh made with Moses at Mt. Sinai was, of course, the Sabbath. We read in Exodus 31:12-12 the words Yahweh gave Moses for Israel:

And Yahweh said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am Yahweh who makes you holy [*qodosh* - set-apart].’”

In verses 16-17, Yahweh reaffirmed the purpose of the Sabbath for Israel as a sign of the Mosaic Covenant:

So the sons of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to celebrate the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the sons of Israel forever. For in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he rested [*shavat*], and was refreshed.

The covenant Yahweh made with David had a sign, namely a stone house that spoke of the eternal house and kingdom promised by Yahweh to David. The stone house is the Temple to be built by his son Solomon. But the eternal house of David—a house of lively stones with Messiah as the Chief Cornerstone—will be built by the Son of David who is the Messiah.

Here's the account in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and 1 Chronicles 17:1-15. In 2 Samuel we read:

Yahweh declares to you that Yahweh Himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from you own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build **a house for my Name**, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son ... Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me. Your throne will be established forever. (2 Sam. 7:12-14, 16)

The Prophet Jeremiah mentions a renewed covenant that was not yet made. In Jeremiah 31:31-34 we read:

"The time is coming," declares Yahweh, "when I will make a renewed covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares Yahweh.

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares Yahweh. "I will put my Torah in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know [*experientially*] Yahweh,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares Yahweh. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

The Renewed Covenant is the covenant the Messiah makes when He comes, Jeremiah taught. The Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants all will be transformed into one renewed covenant by virtue of their being filled up in the Messiah Yeshua, son of David, son of Abraham.

Like the Abrahamic Covenant, faith and obedience will still be foundational for entry into the kingdom of God. Like the Mosaic Covenant, separation from the world will remain foundational, but now it will be internalized, written upon the hearts of Yahweh's people. The Torah will no longer be represented by tablets of stone and manuscripts, but will be written in the fire of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of believers. Like the Davidic Covenant, the Renewed Covenant will have a *mishkan* (tabernacle), the people of God, and be kingdom-founded and focused.

In 1 John 2:27 we read the consequences of this Renewed Covenant in the Messiah Jesus. The Holy Spirit that anointed Him anoints his disciples and teaches them who He is. John wrote:

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things [*deverim* – “words, things”], and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, abide [*sh’vu*] in Him.

**The Sign of the Renewed Covenant: the Cup (Luke 22:14-20).** The Renewed Covenant has a sign, but it is not found in the Old Covenant, or Old Testament. We read of it in Luke 22:14-20:

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; you do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the [*sign of the*] new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

The apostle Paul received the details of this instruction of Yahweh from the other apostles [*shlichim*]. In his first letter to the Corinthians, he filled in more of Yahweh’s conversation at the Passover meal—an “appointed time”. He quotes Yeshua (Jesus), fully implicating the cup as the sign of the Renewed Covenant: “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim Yahweh’s death until he comes.”

The cup signifies the Renewed Covenant, but its significance is not filled up yet like the others.

### **All Covenant Signs Transform**

With the Abrahamic Covenant, Mosaic Covenant and Davidic Covenant being filled up in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) and, as a result, being transformed into the Renewed Covenant, we do well to see how the signs of these three covenants are transformed as well. Things do not remain the same as they were under the Torah.

The Abrahamic Covenant sign of circumcision of the flesh is filled up in the Messiah who now circumcises the heart. No longer is it obligatory for male circumcision to be done for evidence of faith in God. Circumcision of the heart is greater than that of the flesh. After all, we are not saved by a sign but by the reality that the sign testifies about—the Messiah as Savior.

The Mosaic Covenant sign of the Sabbath is filled up in the Messiah who declares He is the Sabbath rest, and, therefore, Today is the certain day that the writer of Hebrews announces as holy, no longer just one of seven days. Today is the day of Sabbath rest if one enters into it by faith in the Messiah. In Hebrews 4:1-11, the Judean Nazarene writer explains:

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith [other mss., *because they did not share in the faith of those who obeyed*]. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"

And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."

It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time ago he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

The Davidic covenant sign of the Temple of stone is filled up in the Messiah who makes all who have faith in Him a part of his holy Temple of flesh.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

### **Sabbath Observance is "Messiah-Observance"**

The *shabbath* is filled up in the Messiah. In Him it was transformed from being a covenant sign to the life-changing reality of our entering into Messiah's Sabbath rest [*shabbath shabbathon*]. Therefore, we do not rehearse the Sabbath anymore as if it were unfulfilled. Instead, we understand it in a new and living way that speaks entirely of the Messiah having sat down, having entered the complete rest in the heavenly realm at his Father's right hand.

In the Gospel of Luke, Luke, another Judean Nazarene writer, quotes the words of Jesus (Yeshua) about his anticipated Sabbath rest when He would sit down at the right hand of Yahweh's throne.

He wrote: "And from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22:69).



The Gospel of Mark affirms this expectation of Yeshua: “So then, when the Lord Jesus [Yeshua] had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven, and sat down [*yeshev*, from *yashav* – “to sit down, abide, rest”] at the right hand of God” (16:19).

The Apostle Paul weighed in on the Messiah becoming the fullness of the Sabbath rest in his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians.

To the Ephesians he wrote of God who “raised him from the dead, and seated him [*yoshivehu*] at his right hand in the heavens” (1:20).

To the Colossians he similarly wrote with encouragement for them to participate in the heavenly rest available now in the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua): “If then you have been raised up with Messiah, keep seeking the things above, where Messiah is seated [*yoshev*] at the right hand of God” (3:1).

The Judean Nazarene writer of the Letter to the Hebrews similarly shows the fullness of the Sabbath being in Messiah, as previously explained.

Notice how he emphasizes the strategic point that Yeshua (Jesus) sat down at the right hand of the throne of God: “When he had made purification of sins, he sat down [*yeshev*, from *yashav* – “to sit down,” “to rest”] at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (1:3).

Again, in 10:12, he restates the fact of the Messiah being complete in the heavenly Sabbath *shabbathon* called “Today”: “And he, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down [*yeshev*] at the right hand of God.”

Again, in 12:2 the writer of Hebrews drives his point. He admonishes us to fix “our eyes on Jesus [Yeshua], the author and completer of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down [*yeshev*] at the right hand of the throne of God.”

In the Book of Revelation, the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua) spoke to the *chazzan*—the messenger of the indifferent congregation of Laodicea. If repentance occurred and attitudes changed, Yahweh promised: “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down [*sheveth*] with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down [*yeshev*] with my Father on His throne” (3:21).

The invitation remains open to those needing to repent today. Those who repent, who turn to the Messiah in faith, today are granted entry into the Sabbath rest in Him.

Note that the related words *yashav*, *yeshev*, *yoshev*, *yoshivehu* and *sheveth*—words from the same root word from which the word Sabbath is derived—keep reappearing in Bible passages about the Messiah. These are the same “sit down” words used in the Torah to describe the desired posture of the people of Israel when they properly observed the Sabbath. They were to sit down. All instances of instruction to sit down, or to enter into rest, anticipated the Messiah sitting down at Father’s right hand.

Sabbath observance, therefore, is transformed in the Renewed Covenant. Then it will be, as now it should be for those who have entered into the Sabbath rest by faith, “Messiah observance”—participating in the life of the Messiah “today” as our *Shabbath Shabbathon*. He is everything the Sabbath intended to represent in its instructions of holy living at its fullness.

## **Sabbath Observance as Recital and Fullness**

The purpose of Sabbath observance before the coming of the Messiah was to point to Him in all the weekly recitals of this holy day. No Jewish person should do less than fully observe the Sabbath. The Sabbath taught us and guided us to the Messiah.

Sabbath observances rehearsed the complete rest that the Messiah would give his faithful people when He appeared. External patterns governed the day until then, each rule and practice anticipating his appearance.

Now Messiah has come, having risen from the dead, having ascended into heaven and having sat down at the right hand of Father's throne. Sabbath observance is filled up in Him.

While we should continue to learn from the patterns and promises about the Messiah in the weekly Sabbath, the reality is not the patterns but, rather, the Messiah Himself.

Consider what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians:

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or in respect to an appointed time [*mo'ed*], a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow [*tzei*] of the things that were to come. The reality, however, is found in the Messiah (2:16-17).

What, then, do we do with the weekly Sabbath day? How do we attend to it?

The answer is simple. We see Jesus (Yeshua) in every weekly Sabbath day. The Sabbath and the seven annual "appointed times" are the lens through which we see and explain his redemptive work for Israel, for the Jews today, and for gentiles who believe in Him.

They are reminders of what the Messiah did for us. We recall Jesus (Yeshua) as being the fullness of every Sabbath—the seventh day forever.

We celebrate the weekly Sabbath day as we would a wedding anniversary. We don't repeat the first event of the wedding again and again, but remember it as once and for all time. We concentrate on faithfulness at wedding anniversaries, and so we do with our remembering the Sabbath day.

We look to Him as being our Sabbath rest (*shabbath shabbathon*).

We understand ourselves as having entered into the Sabbath rest through faith in Him, regardless of the day of the week or what "appointed time" may be observed.

Every day of the week is a time extension of the Sabbath rest for those who have entered the eternal "Today" in the Messiah, to rest in Him as the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews taught. Daily we participate in the Messiah and the Sabbath rest He gives us every moment of our new lives in Him.

Having entered into the Sabbath rest in the Messiah, we work through the six days of every week with longing for the Sabbath day, knowing what they proclaim to every generation. The days of the week and the Sabbath declare his eternal work of redemption for mortal humans.

But it is more than this by far.

We know more reckon our days exactly as were done in former times. We do not shrink back from our Sabbath rest in the Messiah already obtained to return to the pattern of the six work days as if the Sabbath was not revealed in the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua).

By faith in Him we remain in one day only—the eternal Sabbath of “Today”. Our work days are finished in Him. They are done. Our works cannot save us. Though only the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath, every day is counted as being in the Sabbath rest—“Today”.

## APPENDIX

### What About Sunday Worship in the Churches?

Absolutely nothing is wrong with worshiping on Sunday as is common among the gentile believers in the Messiah. It is not the Sabbath day, of course, but this doesn’t matter. As long as “replacement theology” is not invoked as if Israel is rejected by God and no longer are his chosen people or nation, or no longer part of his plan for the ages, then why should it be a problem with anyone—Jew or gentile?

Worship is in order every day of the week. For the believer in the Messiah, we have entered into the *Shabbath Shabbathon* through faith in Him, called “Today”. That’s every day of the week.

The Bible doesn’t teach that the seventh day is to be a day every week to gather the congregation for an assortment of duties and events in service to Him. Some may argue differently, but the burden of biblical proof, not tradition, rests with them. Nor do we have controversy with those who refuse to recognize any other day of the week as the day to gather the congregation. Let us live together in peace as much as possible within us.

Sunday meetings among gentile believers is about work—the creative work of worship. Lots of energy is expended, not exactly what the Sabbath day is about. It is better to have these work-intensive services and events on another day of the week than the Sabbath. Since governments, corporations and businesses tend to recognize the first day of the week as an optional day to rest other than the Sabbath, then we should take advantage of such freedoms.

Why is Sunday so important, then, to gentile believers in the Messiah?

First of all, it is important to Jewish believers and gentile believers in the Messiah. It was the day our Lord, the Messiah Jesus (Yeshua) was resurrected from the dead after his crucifixion three days earlier. Sundays memorialize the resurrection to believing Jews and gentiles alike—at least form most.

Second, during the first century, Jewish believers met in the synagogue on the Sabbath day with other Jewish people, proselytes and God-fearers among the gentiles. Not until Rabbi Akiva and others of his group prevailed to add another benediction to the synagogue service that anathematized Jewish believers, did Jewish believers fail to meet with other Jewish people in the synagogue.

Jewish believers with the proselytes and God-fearers among them who received the Messiah also met after Sabbath ended at sunset. This was their time apart from the unbelieving Jews at the synagogue. They met as a fellowship into the night—which was called in the Gospels, “early on the first day of the week.”

The story of Eutychus in the Book of Acts is one of these night gatherings.

The Roman calendar is different from the Hebrew calendar. Whereas the Jewish calendar begins a day at sunset and ends with sunset, the Roman calendar begins at midnight and ends at midnight. Thus, in time, what was seen as a “Saturday night” gathering of believers was changed to “Sunday morning”—after midnight. These meetings began at dawn—the original gentile-led Sunday service.

The difference between the Jewish day and the Roman day caused quite an issue for Bible translators of the Gospels as to when the resurrection occurred. Was it truly “early at the beginning of the day” (which was after sunset following the Sabbath), or was it “early at dawn of the next day” as some translators reworked it for the benefit of its Greco-Roman readers?

The Hebrew calendar is accurate about this matter, but the power of the Caesar caused great concern for the Latin Fathers to accommodate his new definitions of time.

Thus, this special meeting of the faithful believers shifted eventually from Saturday night (of the Roman calendar) to Sunday morning on the Roman calendar.

During the Middle Ages, the early morning hour for Mass at daybreak began to be reconsidered by some who wanted a later hour. The Reformers, particularly changed the starting time to later morning hours.

Martin Luther is attributed with moving the hour of Mass to the last possible hour of the morning at eleven o’clock. Tradition says his Saturday night beer-drinking festivities left him feeling unfit early on Sunday morning. He reportedly reset the time of the morning worship hour to accommodate his mood, ending with the last possible hour to conduct a Mass before noon.

History is interesting.

Regardless, when gentile believers meet on Sunday it should not be a matter of controversy. In fact, Sunday mornings are ideal for reaching gentiles in our communities. Gentiles are used to Sundays as a time when they can do a lot of things apart from work. We should take advantage of the opportunity, not diminish it with controversies that have no advantage to the advancement of the gospel to the nations. The very purpose of Israel is to be a light of Yahweh

to the nation. The form and function of this effort to make disciples among gentiles should be of no critical, fellowship-breaking issue among all true believers.