

"Think not that I come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Matthew 5:17

Jewish Heritage Revival



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"And When he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" John 10:4

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What Happened to the Sabbath?

The answer to this question will differ, depending on whom you ask.

Pose this question to a Jewish person whether they believe in Messiah or not and you will likely receive the answer:

"What do you mean what has happened to it? Nothing has happened to it. We honor and keep Shabbat every week."

In some cases, within the Jewish community, there are "non-practicing" Jewish people, who do not follow Torah today. This is unfortunate in that Torah was given to all Jewish people.

Pose this question to a non-Jewish believer in Messiah (Christian), whom use the very same scriptures and you will receive a very different answer:

- "We worship on Sunday, the "Lord's day".
- The Sabbath is in the "old testament" which is done away with, not relevant anymore...we have the new testament.
- "We are under grace, not under the law"

The same identical scriptures for both Jewish believers in Messiah and non-Jewish believers in Messiah, yet two very different perspectives. The purpose of this article is to provide perspective regarding the Sabbath, its importance and relevance for both Jewish (non-believers and believers in Messiah) and non-Jewish believers in Messiah (Christians).

This journey will take us through a history that predates Abraham and the nation of Israel for whom the Sabbath is identified with. Along this journey we will rediscover the significance and importance of the Sabbath, according to Adonai Himself. We will look at history, to help us understand how we have arrived at this place in time whereby believers in Messiah (primarily non-Jewish believers) consider the Sabbath to be done away with, of little importance / significance, "a yoke of burden under the law" or a legalistic tradition. This journey through history will include the legalistic interpretations that developed over the centuries within Judaism, in leading to a misunderstanding and misapplication of what the Sabbath was truly meant to be. We will also include the errors in understanding that have developed within the church...the very entity that claims Yeshua as Messiah.

You will be hard pressed to find support in the New Covenant writings indicating that the Sabbath has been done away with or even moved from Saturday to Sunday, as is widely understood today.

In order to truly understand the significance of the Sabbath for both Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Messiah, we must first understand what the Sabbath is...and therefore, start at the beginning. By the time you have completed reading this article, you will have a complete and full understanding of what the Sabbath is.

The Sabbath and Creation

Before we can go forward, we must first go back to the beginning. Very few people realize that the Sabbath began during Adonai's creation of this world. Before Moses at Sinai there was a Sabbath. Before Abraham, there was a Sabbath. Adonai labored for six days and nights to create all that exists.

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, along with everything in them. On the seventh day God was finished with his work which he had made, so he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. God blessed the seventh day and separated it as holy; because on that day God rested from all his work which he had created, so that it itself could produce." Genesis 2:1 - 3

He established a seventh day and set it apart from the other six days. It was on this day that He rested from all that He had done. The question is usually asked...Did God really have to rest? Unfortunately, people tend to look at this question from a human perspective rather than the from the intent of what was to be established. The purpose was to set an example for those that He created with the ultimate intention of creating a sign between Himself and the nation of Israel, for whom He would set apart from all other nations with important responsibilities that would impact these nations.

God would establish the nation of Israel to be a witness and testimony to the other nations of who God is and ultimately conveying His salvation to the nations, through Messiah.

"He said to me, "You are my servant, Isra'el, through whom I will show my glory." But I said, "I have toiled in vain, spent my strength for nothing, futility." Yet my cause is with ADONAI, my reward is with my God. So now ADONAI says - he formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Ya'akov back to him, to have Isra'el gathered to him, so that I will be honored in the sight of ADONAI, my God having become my strength he has said, "It is not enough that you are merely my servant to raise up the tribes of Ya'akov and restore the offspring of Isra'el. I will also make you a light to the nations, so my salvation can spread to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:3 - 6

The Sabbath and Israel - Torah

Before Israel had come to Sinai, Moshe had already received instruction from Adonai, regarding a day of rest. The day prior (the sixth day) they gathered a double portion of manna (man) in that they were not to labor in gathering on Shabbat.

"On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two 'omers per person; and all the community leaders came and reported to Moshe. He told them, "This is what ADONAI has said: 'Tomorrow is a holy Shabbat for ADONAI. Bake what you want to bake; boil what you want to boil; and whatever is left over, set aside and keep for the morning.'" They set it aside till morning, as Moshe had ordered; and it didn't rot or have worms. Moshe said, "Today, eat that; because today is a Shabbat for ADONAI - today you won't find it in the field. Gather it six days, but the seventh day is the Shabbat - on that day there won't be any." However, on the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather and found none. ADONAI said to Moshe, "How long will you refuse to observe my mitzvot and teachings? Look, ADONAI has given you the Shabbat. This is why he is providing bread for two days on the sixth day. Each of you, stay where you are; no one is to leave his place on the seventh day." Exodus 16:22 - 30

A day of rest was a foreign concept to Israel, having been under the bondage of slavery for so long. There is no liberty when one is under the control of a tyrant. The concept of a day to freely rest was foreign to the nations of the world. The direction of Egypt was to build...grow...become more powerful. In order to do this, they required labor. They had it in the nation of Israel, who was continually wrought with an ever increasing work load. So much so, that Adonai heard their cries:

"I am the God of your father," he continued, "the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz'chak and the God of Ya'akov." Moshe covered his face, because he was afraid to look at God. ADONAI said, "I have seen how my people are being oppressed in Egypt and heard their cry for release from their slavemasters, because I know their pain. I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that country to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the place of the Kena'ani, Hitti, Emori, P'rizi, Hivi and Y'vusi. Yes, the cry of the people of Isra'el has come to me, and I have seen how terribly the Egyptians oppress them. Exodus 3:6 - 9

The mindset of Israel was as such that even an instruction to rest was contrary to the conditions they endured for so many years. It went against everything they knew and experienced in Egypt, yet even something for their benefit needed to be given as instruction.

We now come to the giving of Torah at Mount Sinai and the fourth commandment involving the Sabbath.

"Remember the day, Shabbat, to set it apart for God. You have six days to labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Shabbat for ADONAI your God. On it, you are not to do any kind of work, not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your livestock, and not the foreigner staying with you inside the gates to your property. For in six days, ADONAI made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. This is why ADONAI blessed the day, Shabbat, and separated it for himself. Exodus 20:8 - 11

The instruction (commandment) given here is all inclusive...

Witness the stark contrast from what Israel experienced in Egypt to the instruction Adonai gives regarding those who are to refrain from work on the seventh day:

- Male or Female slave
- Livestock
- Foreigner staying with you on your property

The impression that there was no grace under this covenant given to Moshe is greatly misunderstood. The Sabbath would become a remembrance or memorial regarding Israel's experience and deliverance from slavery.

God set Israel apart from the other nations. As a sign, God gave them the Sabbath and instructed them to keep it. The Sabbath would be a symbol of the covenant between God and Israel

"ADONAI said to Moshe, "Tell the people of Isra'el, 'You are to observe my Shabbats; for this is a sign between me and you through all your generations; so that you will know that I am ADONAI, who sets you apart for me. Therefore you are to keep my Shabbat, because it is set apart for you. Everyone who treats it as ordinary must be put to death; for whoever does any work on it is to be cut off from his people. On six days work will get done; but the seventh day is Shabbat, for complete rest, set apart for ADONAI. Whoever does any work on the day of Shabbat must be put to death. The people of Isra'el are to keep the Shabbat, to observe Shabbat through all their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the people of Isra'el forever; for in six days ADONAI made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he stopped working and rested.'" Exodus 31:12 - 17

"Moshe assembled the whole community of the people of Isra'el and said to them, "These are the things which ADONAI has ordered you to do. On six days work is to be done, but the seventh day is to be a holy day for you, a Shabbat of complete rest in honor of ADONAI. Whoever does any work on it is to be put to death. You are not to kindle a fire in any of your homes on Shabbat." Exodus 35:1 - 3

The seriousness of such an instruction was emphasized with the penalty of death should it be violated. This instruction wasn't from man, but from God. With such a stern punishment for violating it, implies the importance God placed on the Sabbath for Israel. As stated before, it was made as a sign, identifying the covenant God made with Israel. No other nation has such a relationship with the Creator of all things.

To the generation that would enter the land...God confirms the establishment of a Sabbath day for rest:

"Observe the day of Shabbat, to set it apart as holy, as ADONAI your God ordered you to do. You have six days to labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Shabbat for ADONAI your God. On it you are not to do any kind of work - not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your ox, your donkey or any of your other livestock, and not the foreigner staying with you inside the gates to your property - so that your male and female servants can rest just as you do. You are to remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and ADONAI your God brought you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore ADONAI your God has ordered you to keep the day of Shabbat." Deuteronomy 5:12 - 15

Not only was there to be a rest for the people, livestock and servants, but there was also to be a rest for the land.

"Tell the people of Isra'el, 'When you enter the land I am giving you, the land itself is to observe a Shabbat rest for ADONAI. Six years you will sow your field; six years you will prune your grapevines and gather their produce. But in the seventh year is to be a Shabbat of complete rest for the land, a Shabbat for ADONAI; you will neither sow your field nor prune your grapevines. You are not to harvest what grows by itself from the seeds left by your previous harvest, and you are not to gather the grapes of your untended vine; it is to be a year of complete rest for the land." Leviticus 25:2 - 5

When you look at today's techniques for farming you have what is known as crop rotation, whereby, fields are given a rest and are allowed to grow grass in order to replenish nutrients in the soil. This concept was not developed by man, but by God.

Then there would be the Sabbath of Sabbaths. After seven, seven year Sabbaths, there will be an entire year of Yovel

(Jubilee). This year of Jubilee...a Sabbath of Sabbaths:

"You are to count seven Shabbats of years, seven times seven years, that is, forty-nine years. Then, on the tenth day of the seventh month, on Yom-Kippur, you are to sound a blast on the shofar; you are to sound the shofar all through your land; and you are to consecrate the fiftieth year, proclaiming freedom throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It will be a yovel for you; you will return everyone to the land he owns, and everyone is to return to his family. That fiftieth year will be a yovel for you; in that year you are not to sow, harvest what grows by itself or gather the grapes of untended vines; because it is a yovel. It will be holy for you; whatever the fields produce will be food for all of you. In this year of yovel, every one of you is to return to the land he owns." Leviticus 25:8 - 13

And with it came special blessing. There would be back to back years of rest for the land. Meaning, no new crops would be planted for two entire growing seasons. They could glean from the land what it produced naturally. However, this promise was made to Israel:

'Rather, you are to keep my regulations and rulings and act accordingly. If you do, you will live securely in the land. The land will yield its produce, you will eat until you have enough, and you will live there securely. "If you ask, "If we aren't allowed to sow seed or harvest what our land produces, what are we going to eat the seventh year?" then I will order my blessing on you during the sixth year, so that the land brings forth enough produce for all three years. The eighth year you will sow seed but eat the the old, stored produce until the ninth year; that is, until the produce of the eighth year comes in, you will eat the old, stored food." Leviticus 25:18 - 22

This blessing would flow if Israel would follow God's instructions. They would receive enough produce in the sixth year to sustain them for three years, until the crops were mature for harvest in the eighth year.

The Sabbath, given to Israel, is well established throughout scripture. There is no denying its significance or importance. The rest that God has instilled, is the foundation for regeneration, both physically and spiritually. Regeneration for human, animal and land. A time is required to recharge our batteries. As we follow God's instruction, His blessing comes.

The concept of a seven day cycle, consisting of six days of work and tasks, culminating in a seventh day of rest and worship was entirely unique to the covenant relationship Adonai had established with Israel. As part of the entire covenant the Sabbath was just as important as any other commandment. To reject the Sabbath in essence rejected the covenant. The two are intertwined in such a way that they cannot be separated. Think of this covenant as a constitution for a nation - Israel.

What can we then say about Israel and the Sabbath?

1. It is a sign / symbol of the covenant Adonai has made with Israel,
2. It is a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt
3. It is the establishment of a specific time set aside for worshipping Adonai as creator of all.

All of the above not only confirm the covenant made through Moshe, but also confirms the covenant made with Avraham.

"As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of many nations. Your name will no longer be Avram [exalted father], but your name will be Avraham [father of many], because I have made you the father of many nations. I will cause you to be very fruitful. I will make nations of you, kings will descend from you. "I am establishing my covenant between me and you, along with your descendants after you, generation after generation, as an everlasting covenant, to be God for you and for your descendants after you. I will give you and your descendants after you the land in which you are now foreigners, all the land of Kena'an, as a permanent possession; and I will be their God." God said to Avraham, "As for you, you are to keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you, generation after generation." Genesis 17:4 - 9

The Sabbath and Israel - After Torah

The establishment of the Sabbath in Torah has been well documented:

- A sign of the creation
- A sign of the covenant between God and the children of Israel

What happened after Torah? There are plenty of other examples of Shabbat and Israel that occurred throughout their history as recorded in the balance of the Tenach, not to mention modern history as we know it today.

Two of the many accounts whereby Israel as a nation struggled to honor God include...

Jeremiah's account prior to the exile at the hands of Babylon, as a result of their transgressions, covers a period from 627 BCE to 585 BCE.

The fate of Israel had been set, as a result of its unwillingness to repent from her actions of idolatry and a hardened heart towards Adonai.

"Y'hudah's sin is written with an iron pen; with a diamond point it is engraved on the tablet of their hearts and on the horns of your altars. As they remember their children, so they remember their altars and their sacred poles by the green trees on the high hills. My mountain in the field, your wealth and all your treasures will be plundered; because of the sin of your high places throughout your territory. You will relinquish your hold on your heritage which I gave you. I will make you serve your enemies in a land you do not know. For you have kindled my fiery anger, and it will burn forever." Jeremiah 20:1 - 4

Jeremiah makes a final plea on behalf of Adonai.

"Then ADONAI said this to me: "Go, and stand at the People's Gate, where the kings of Y'hudah go in and out, and at all the gates of Yerushalayim; and say to them: 'Kings of Y'hudah, all Y'hudah and all living in Yerushalayim who enter through these gates, hear the word of ADONAI! Here is what ADONAI says: "If you value your lives, don't carry anything on Shabbat or bring it in through the gates of Yerushalayim; don't carry anything out of your houses on Shabbat; and don't do any work. Instead, make Shabbat a holy day. I ordered your ancestors to do this, but they neither listened nor paid attention; rather, they stiffened their necks, so that they wouldn't have to hear or receive instruction. However, if you will pay careful heed to me," says ADONAI "and carry nothing through the gates of this city on Shabbat, but instead make Shabbat a day which is holy and not for doing work; then kings and princes occupying the throne of David will enter through the gates of this city, riding in chariots and on horses. They, their princes, the people of Y'hudah and the inhabitants of Yerushalayim will enter; and this city will be inhabited forever. They will come from the cities of Y'hudah, from the places surrounding Yerushalayim, from the land of Binyamin, from the Sh'felah, from the hills and from the Negev, bringing burnt offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings, frankincense and thanksgiving sacrifices to the house of ADONAI. But if you will not obey me and make Shabbat a holy day and not carry loads through the gates of Yerushalayim on Shabbat, then I will set its gates on fire; it will burn up the palaces of Yerushalayim and not be quenched.'" Jeremiah 20:19 - 27

Ezekiel's account prior to the exile at the hands of Babylon, as a result of their transgressions, covers a period from 592 BCE to 570 BCE.

As far back as the exodus from Egypt, Adonai recounts to Jeremiah the rebellious nature of the people.

"I gave them my laws and showed them my rulings; if a person obeys them, he will have life through them. I gave them my Shabbats as a sign between me and them, so that they would know that I, ADONAI, am the one who makes them holy. "But the house of Isra'el rebelled against me in the desert. They did not live by my laws; and they rejected my rulings, which, if a person does, he will have life through them; moreover, they greatly profaned my Shabbats. Then I said I would pour out my fury on them in the desert, in order to destroy them. Ezekiel 20:11 - 13

From generation to generation the spirit of rebellion continued to infect Israel as a disease with no cure. It continued to spread and got progressively worse the longer Israel was infected.

"But the children too rebelled against me. They did not live by my laws or observe my rulings, to obey them, which, if a person does, he will have life by them; and they profaned my Shabbats. Then I said I would pour out my fury on them and spend my anger on them in the desert. Nevertheless, I withdrew my hand and allowed concern for my own reputation to keep me from letting it be profaned in the sight of the nations who had seen when I brought them out. "I also raised my hand and swore to them in the desert that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them through the countries; because they hadn't obeyed my rulings but had rejected my laws and profaned my Shabbats, and their eyes had turned toward their fathers' idols. Exekiel 20:21 - 24

Whether it was the imposing influences of the foreign people that they lived side by side with or by their own hard heartedness, by His Word, when we walk with God and honor His instructions, there is blessing. The worldly path will lead to destruction.

Throughout Israel's history there have been times when honoring and keeping the Sabbath were not advisable. At times of war, keeping the Sabbath could have led to destruction. In modern Israel today, during the many battles this restored nation has had to endure, keeping Sabbath could have likely led to its destruction. Their adversaries would have easily taken advantage of such an opportunity, while their guard was down.

In other instances, such as positions of critical care - armed forces, doctors, nurses, police, firefighters...isn't the

greater need of wholeness, safety and protection superseded by the keeping of Sabbath? If one's safety or health was in jeopardy, how could one truly keep the Sabbath? These people have made a commitment to serve and protect so that others may benefit. These people are not always on a set schedule, but work when called. There is no planning for the unexpected happenings in life. The events of September 11, 2001 or the constant struggles Israel faces from all sides of her borders should forever be a constant reminder.

The Evolution of the Sabbath in Judaism

In order to protect the sanctity of the Sabbath, an evolution occurred, whereby establishing what is called a fence or hedge around the initial instruction found in Exodus 20:8 - 11. It would be this method of teaching that would lead into what I would call "traditional" Judaism. The additional commandments are known as the "oral law", which is believed by many Jewish Rabbi's throughout the centuries to have been given at the time Torah was given at Sinai. The influence of these oral commandments began as a result of the exile to Babylon, in that as a nation they had no land to call their own, not to mention being separated from their center of worship, the Temple. It wasn't until approximately 200 CE that the oral law was written into what would become known as the Talmud.

The premise behind this method of placing a fence or hedge around the commandment was to protect the people from transgressing and ultimately breaking the primary commandment. In the case of the Sabbath, the Talmud identifies 39 different actions as work.

Tractate Shabbat comprises 24 chapters of commentary regarding the Sabbath alone. Chapter 7 Mishna 2 comprises the different actions identified as work.

MISHNA II: "The principal acts of labor (prohibited on the Sabbath) are forty less one: Sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding into sheaves, threshing, winnowing, fruit-cleaning, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, wool-shearing, bleaching, combing, dyeing, spinning, warping, making two spindle-trees, weaving two threads, separating two threads (in the warp), tying a knot, untying a knot, sewing on with two stitches, tearing in order to sew together with two stitches, hunting deer, slaughtering the same, skinning them, salting them, preparing the hide, scraping the hair off, cutting it, writing two (single) letters (characters), erasing in order to write two letters, building, demolishing (in order to rebuild), kindling, extinguishing (fire), hammering, transferring from one place into another. These are the principal acts of labor--forty less one."

Throughout the ages, many have believed (including today) that the "oral law" holds equal authority to Torah (written Law). Therefore, these 39 additional instructions regarding the identification of work have been instructed as law (halakah) by the Jewish leaders throughout the centuries.

Therefore, in addition to the instructions found in Torah, the Mishnah (Talmud) was used to expand the understanding of what defined work and therefore what was prohibited / permitted on the Sabbath.

Was Yeshua instructing against keeping the Sabbath or the legalistic interpretation of Torah that included the addition of the oral law when encountering the Torah teachers and P'rushim (Pharisees)?

The Sabbath and Messiah

It is believed that when the Messiah would come, He would explain Torah to us. Well that day came when Yeshua ministered to the lost sheep of Israel nearly 2000 years ago. The scribes and Torah teachers (P'rushim or Pharisee) were the primary authorities regarding Torah. It was also at this time that the oral law (discussed above) was well established and taught throughout Judea. Many of the confrontations between Yeshua and the religious leaders involved either a misrepresentation of Torah or the burdensome addition of the many additional instructions of the oral law. Unfortunately, those who teach now, don't take into account this additional influence of the time of Messiah when teaching others. The view taught is in relation to Torah "the Law" as being the burdensome, legalistic influence that Messiah is teaching against, when it is the traditional aspects of Judaism found in the addition of the oral law.

Through the New Covenant writings, we have evidence of Messiah coming to instruct us, not to mention being an example for us regarding what we are to be like, regarding true Torah observance, not the legalistic understanding that was so ingrained throughout Judea. The heart of this New covenant is resonated by the words given to Jeremiah:

"Here, the days are coming," says ADONAI, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Y'hudah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, violated my covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them," says ADONAI. "For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those

days," says ADONAI: **"I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts;** I will be their God, and they will be my people. "For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says ADONAI: **"I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts;** I will be their God, and they will be my people. Jeremiah 31:31 - 34

We witness Yeshua in the synagogue on Shabbat, just as any other Jewish male over the age of 13 would be doing:

"He taught in their synagogues, and everyone respected him. Now when he went to Natzeret, where he had been brought up, on Shabbat he went to the synagogue as usual. He stood up to read, and he was given the scroll of the prophet Yesha`yahu (Isaiah). Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written, **"The Spirit of ADONAI is upon me; therefore he has anointed me to announce Good News to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim freedom for the imprisoned and renewed sight for the blind, to release those who have been crushed, to proclaim a year of the favor of ADONAI."** After closing the scroll and returning it to the shammash, he sat down; and the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. He started to speak to them: **"Today, as you heard it read, this passage of the Tanakh was fulfilled!"** Luke 4:15 - 21

- He taught there.
- He was given aliyah to read. In this case it was from the Haftorah, Isaiah 61:1 - 3

As Messiah conveyed to the people:

"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Matthew 5: 17

Shabbat was part of the instruction given to Moshe, by Adonai for all of Israel. Torah was the constitution for the nation of Israel. It would be Messiah who would properly interpret and instruct...as it was originally meant to be lived by.

Our first example - Did Yeshua break the Sabbath?

Based on the teachings of the time that involved the oral law, the Torah teachers and P'rushim accused Yeshua of doing work on the Sabbath. Witness their reaction:

"One Shabbat during that time, Yeshua was walking through some wheat fields. His talmidim were hungry, so they began picking heads of grain and eating them. On seeing this, the P'rushim said to him, "Look! Your talmidim are violating Shabbat!" Matthew 12:1 - 2

According to the teaching of the day, under the 39 parameters of what defined work, the P'rushim looked only at the action, and not at the intent. Witness our Messiah's response to their accusation:

"But he said to them, Haven't you ever read what David did when he and those with him were hungry? He entered the House of God and ate the Bread of the Presence!" -- which was prohibited, both to him and to his companions; it is permitted only to the cohanim. **"Or haven't you read in the Torah that on Shabbat the cohanim profane Shabbat and yet are blameless? I tell you, there is in this place something greater than the Temple! If you knew what `I want compassion rather than animal-sacrifice' meant, you would not condemn the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of Shabbat!"** Matthew 12:1 - 8

The Sabbath is not meant to detract from ones wholeness regarding their lives. Hunger, a basic need, is greater than the Sabbath, if it were to cause harm to an individual. How can one truly appreciate and enjoy Shabbat if they are deprived of a basic need for living?

Notice the final statement made by Yeshua - **"For the Son of Man is Lord of Shabbat!"**

What does it mean to be Lord of the Sabbath? Simply put, the one who created it is the one who is in charge of it. Many will use the Greek word kurios, meaning - supreme in authority and is also used to identify God, Lord, master, sir. There is no differentiation between God as Lord and a man who is lord of a household.

However, in Hebrew, there are two words used to represent Lord (lord). Adon, is used when referring to a human ruler (small l). The Hebrew word for Lord that is used throughout the Tenach when identifying God is Y'hovah, one of His many names. Many will associate Y'hovah with the more anglicized Jehovah. Yeshua, stated I am Y'hovah, the one who established the Sabbath...further emphasizing the echud (oneness) of God.

Many times it is the Greek word that is used when referencing the Brith Hadoshah writings. However, when you apply what Messiah would have said from an Hebrew basis, the understanding of what He said becomes all the more authoritative. He didn't say He was lord of the Sabbath...but Lord of the Sabbath...Y'hovah...Creator...God of the

Sabbath.

In the same passage, we witness another example whereby the wholeness of an individual takes precedence over the Sabbath itself:

"Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue. A man there had a shriveled hand. Looking for a reason to accuse him of something, they asked him, "Is healing permitted on Shabbat?" Matthew 12:9 - 10

Witness our Messiah's answer:

"But he answered, "If you have a sheep that falls in a pit on Shabbat, which of you won't take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore, what is permitted on Shabbat is to do good." Then to the man he said, "Hold out your hand." As he held it out, it became restored, as sound as the other one." Matthew 12:11 - 13

Compare the same passage (response of Yeshua) found in Mark:

"Then to them he said, "What is permitted on Shabbat? Doing good or doing evil? Saving life or killing?" But they said nothing. Then, looking them over and feeling both anger with them and sympathy for them at the stoniness of their hearts, he said to the man, "Hold out your hand." As he held it out, it became restored." Mark 3:4 - 5

Our Messiah's response cuts through to the heart of Torah. What is more important? Good or evil? Saving a life or killing? Their hearts were rock hard towards His response. Meaning that their desire to do as Torah had instructed and serve God by leading the people as He had intended was gone. They were more concerned with the legalistic letter of the law (oral) than the true intention of the Law (Torah).

If you will again refer to the listing above in "The Evolution of the Sabbath in Judaism" from tractate 7, mishnah 2, of the 39 different tasks regarding that which is considered work, healing is not listed.

Note: Also found in Mark 2:23 - 28 and Luke 6:1 - 11

Our second example: Is healing on the Sabbath permitted?

"Yeshua was teaching in one of the synagogues on Shabbat. A woman came up who had a spirit which had crippled her for eighteen years; she was bent double and unable to stand erect at all. On seeing her, Yeshua called her and said to her, "Lady, you have been set free from your weakness!" He put his hands on her, and at once she stood upright and began to glorify God" Luke 13:10 - 13

A woman trapped in a physical bondage for 18 years is made whole on the Sabbath. Her response is to give glory to God for being set free from her physical bondage. The response of the president of the synagogue is completely opposite to that of the lady...critical and judgmental:

"But the president of the synagogue, indignant that Yeshua had healed on Shabbat, spoke up and said to the congregation, "There are six days in the week for working; so come during those days to be healed, not on Shabbat!" Luke 13:14

Yeshua's response to such a heartless comment:

"However, the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Each one of you on Shabbat -- don't you unloose your ox or your donkey from the stall and lead him off to drink? This woman is a daughter of Avraham, and the Adversary kept her tied up for eighteen years! Shouldn't she be freed from this bondage on Shabbat?" By these words, Yeshua put to shame the people who opposed him; but the rest of the crowd were happy about all the wonderful things that were taking place through him." Luke 13:15 - 17

Shabbat is not a day set apart by a man made list of do's and don'ts, but a time that is separated from the other six days of the week, specifically for God and our own regeneration.

The Sabbath and the New Covenant

Many will teach that the Sabbath is no longer relevant in that it is not instructed within the New Covenant writings. However, the New Covenant writings also don't say that the Sabbath has been abolished either.

The mindset behind this position regarding the abolishment of the Sabbath can be derived from the manner by which scripture is viewed. In order to support the position that the Feasts given to Israel, including the Sabbath have been done away with, is the result of a dispensationalist view whereby God's covenants are separate and therefore distinct from one another. In the case of the New Covenant, it is expressed as a covenant of grace made with the church, is

separate and distinct from the covenants made with Israel. Therefore, the New Covenant writings are viewed as Torah (instruction / commandment) itself without consideration to the source of its many quotes and references. The New Covenant writings reference the Tenach some 1300 times, whether as direct quote or reference.

One must keep in mind the origins of this new segment of Judaism, the Messianic community (what is called the church today), was interwoven within the fabric of the Jewish culture of the first century. With its origin beginning in Jerusalem and spreading from there, the Jewish foundation of Messiah was well established. Hence, the issue of the Sabbath wasn't an issue with regards to its proper observance.

We must also keep in mind that what we have today, in the form of the New Covenant writings were not incorporated into a canon of text until much later. The canon of text used in the first century was the Tenach (Torah, Prophets and Writings). This was the foundation for which believers, both Jewish and non-Jewish used. The issue at the time wasn't as it is today...what do we do with Jewish people coming to faith. The issue of the first century was "what do we do with non-Jewish people coming to faith in believing in the Jewish Messiah", not to mention the Ruach ha Kodesh (Holy Spirit), coming upon them? This was the question that prompted the leaders of the Messianic community to gather at Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15, some 20 years after Yeshua had completed His purpose on Earth. Here is the response from the Messianic community leaders regarding the non-Jewish believer:

"Therefore, my opinion is that we should not put obstacles in the way of the Goyim who are turning to God. Instead, we should write them a letter telling them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood. For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat." Acts 15:19 - 21

The foundation, being Torah (Moshe) was to be the foundation by which non-Jewish believers would grow in their faith as they begin to eliminate the pagan customs and influences from their lives. A new standard for living is introduced to them. This manner of adoption is by no means foreign, in that when we read in Torah of the stranger / foreigner who comes to live within the community of Israel...people such as Rahab and Ruth, whom said:

"But Rut said, "Don't press me to leave you and stop following you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die; and there I will be buried. May ADONAI bring terrible curses on me, and worse ones as well, if anything but death separates you and me." Ruth 1:16 - 17

They are coming along side the people and ways of the God of Israel, and in essence establishing their own covenant as did Ruth. A proclamation of faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

As you have witnessed from the examples set forth by Messiah (above) in properly instructing the true intentions of the Sabbath, and the instructions set forth in Torah, He certainly doesn't indicate its obsolescence. To the contrary, He proclaims His Lordship over this day, set apart from the time of creation and given to Israel as a sign.

With that said, how do we reconcile some of Sha'ul's (Paul) writings, specifically to the Galatians and Colossians?

It is extremely important that when we are reading Sha'ul's letters, we keep in mind that each letter was written to a specific congregation, experiencing specific problems.

In the case of the congregation at Galatia, there was a faction within the Messianic community that believed gentiles who were coming to faith in Messiah should become Jewish. This mode of thinking also included adult circumcision. Ultimately taking parts of "traditional Judaism" with a foundation of belief in the oral law and applying it to non-Jewish believers. One would think that Sha'ul's training as a Pharisee would have led him to concur in that at one time his zealotry for traditional Judaism led to the persecution of the Messianic community.

Many Bible translations don't distinguish between the variations of "nomos" (translated to law / Law of Moses) found throughout Sha'ul's writings. Within Galatians, Sha'ul uses variations that when properly translated differentiate between Torah and legalistic interpretation of Torah. There is an enormous difference between what many Bible translations don't recognize. In response to Kefa's (Peter's) inappropriate actions Sha'ul writes:

"We are Jews by birth, not so-called 'Goyishe sinners'; even so, we have come to realize that a person is not declared righteous by God on the ground of his legalistic observance of Torah commands, but through the Messiah Yeshua's trusting faithfulness. Therefore, we too have put our trust in Messiah Yeshua and become faithful to him, in order that we might be declared righteous on the ground of the Messiah's trusting faithfulness and not on the ground of our legalistic observance of Torah commands. For on the ground of legalistic observance of Torah commands, no one will be declared righteous. But if, in seeking to be declared righteous by God through our union with the Messiah, we ourselves are indeed found to be sinners, then is the Messiah an aider and abettor of sin? Heaven forbid! Indeed, if I build up again the legalistic bondage which I destroyed, I really do make myself a transgressor. For it was through letting the Torah speak for itself that I died to its traditional legalistic misinterpretation, so that I might live in direct

relationship with God." Galatians 2:15 - 19

Sha'ul is stating that it isn't Torah itself but how one has added to it or improperly understands it, and therefore applies it incorrectly. Remember, Sha'ul, before his transformation, was as he describes himself - a Pharisee of Pharisees. After his encounter with Messiah, a new understanding of faithfulness took root, not to mention the proper perspective of Torah.

We live in right relationship with God when we allow Torah to speak for itself. Messiah is the one who holds the key.

In the past, when I have made mention of either the Feasts or Sabbath, I will usually be confronted with the following scripture written by Sha'ul to Colossi:

"So don't let anyone pass judgment on you in connection with eating and drinking, or in regard to a Jewish festival or Rosh-Hodesh or Shabbat. These are a shadow of things that are coming, but the body is of the Messiah." Colossians 2:16 - 17

Written to a primarily non-Jewish community who was being "bullied" into legalistically observing kashrut (kosher) and the Feasts, Sha'ul is challenging the impending burden of observance by pressure. To the non-Jewish believer, they are not ultimately Torah bound into keeping these things.

However, just because Sha'ul was conveying to them not to let anyone pass judgment, doesn't mean that they didn't recognize and keep the Sabbath holy. He continues to state that these things are a shadow of things that are coming. Meaning...these things given to Israel will have meaning for them as well in that they will be accomplished through Messiah. We have written articles on all the Feasts of God given to Israel in Leviticus 23:

- ["Passover - Past Present and Forever"](#)
- [Shavuot - The Feast of Pentecost - The giving of Torah and His Ruach ha Kodesh \(Holy Spirit\)](#)
- [The Latter Feasts - Feast of Trumpets \(Rosh Hashanah\) History and Prophecy \(Part 1\)](#)
- [The Latter Feasts - Day of Atonement \(Yom Kippur\) History and Prophecy \(Part 2\)](#)
- [The Latter Feasts - Feast of Tabernacles - History and Prophecy \(Part 3\)](#)

The issue today isn't as it was then. Today, anything Torah or Jewish related is viewed as having been done away with, are no longer relevant, considered to be legalistic or just by its mere mention, the perception invokes one of legalism. However, this view cannot be supported by scripture. If anything, the Sabbath and Feasts are more relevant to believers, whether Jewish or non-Jewish than ever before. We have posted many articles relating the Feasts of God given to Israel and their relationship to Yeshua. Could there be anything more relevant than the fulfillment of His mission in conjunction with the Feasts as our roadmap? Many of the false teachings conveyed from the pulpits of the world focus primarily on an anti-semitic perspective, whether intentional or not, and rob the believer of a true presentation of the context of their faith.

As I had stated at the beginning of this section, there is a belief that the Sabbath was not instructed within the New Covenant writings. If that is the case, how does one respond to Hebrews chapter four?

"Therefore, let us be terrified of the possibility that, even though the promise of entering his rest remains, any one of you might be judged to have fallen short of it; for Good News has also been proclaimed to us, just as it was to them. But the message they heard didn't do them any good, because those who heard it did not combine it with trust. For it is we who have trusted who enter the rest. It is just as he said, "And in my anger, I swore that they would not enter my rest." He swore this even though his works have been in existence since the founding of the universe. For there is a place where it is said, concerning the seventh day, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." And once more, our present text says, "They will not enter my rest." Therefore, since it still remains for some to enter it, and those who received the Good News earlier did not enter, he again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David, so long afterwards, in the text already given,

"Today, if you hear God's voice, don't harden your hearts." For if Y'hoshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later of another "day." So there remains a Shabbat-keeping for God's people.

For the one who has entered God's rest has also rested from his own works, as God did from his. Therefore, let us do our best to enter that rest; so that no one will fall short because of the same kind of disobedience." Hebrews 4:1 - 11

A typical response to this passage tends to "spiritualize" the aspect of God's rest, rather than the instruction of a physical rest. A rather confusing stance to say the least. Originally written to Jewish believers, this book / letter conveys to God's people that there still remains a Sabbath. Now, the question to ask is "Who are God's people?"

Are they Jewish believers only?

Are they not also non-Jewish believers?

At the time of the writing of this book / letter (Hebrews), the author was writing to a Jewish audience that was about to face life outside of its land and without the Temple. The writer's intent was to show the Jewish people a better way that God had provided through Messiah that didn't require an earthly High Priest, animal sacrifices or the Temple. Messiah is all those things combined.

Today, with the scenario completely reversed and the influence for believers coming from a non-Jewish perspective, the impact of the Hebrews letter provides context and perspective from a Jewish position, something that is practically void outside of the Messianic Jewish community.

To use the analogy of just who is wagging the tail, the dog or the tail itself, one must ask, is the context of the faith in Messiah from the branches that were grafted into the vine (the wild olive branches) who were once strangers to the God of Israel? Sha'ul provides an answer in his letter to the congregation at Rome:

"But if some of the branches were broken off, and you - a wild olive - were grafted in among them and have become equal sharers in the rich root of the olive tree, then don't boast as if you were better than the branches! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root, the root is supporting you." Romans 11:17 - 18

The root is supposed to support the wild branches that have been grafted in. Unfortunately, today the wild branches have overtaken the root from which they were supposed to be supported. I would consider this a primary reason why there is little to no understanding or regard for the Sabbath and what it truly means. Please keep in mind this is not a blanket statement that covers all non-Jewish believers, but is a majority opinion that is conveyed right from the teaching seminaries for which today's leadership is groomed.

Does the context of faith in Messiah not come from the natural branches that were responsible for conveying Messiah to the nations?

"I am speaking the truth - as one who belongs to the Messiah, I do not lie; and also bearing witness is my conscience, governed by the Ruach HaKodesh: my grief is so great, the pain in my heart so constant, that I could wish myself actually under God's curse and separated from the Messiah, if it would help my brothers, my own flesh and blood, the people of Isra'el! They were made God's children, the Sh'khinah has been with them, the covenants are theirs, likewise the giving of the Torah, the Temple service and the promises; the Patriarchs are theirs; and from them, as far as his physical descent is concerned, came the Messiah, who is over all. Praised be ADONAI for ever! Amen." Romans 9:1 - 5

Did Sha'ul stop keeping the Sabbath holy after he came to believe and recognize that Yeshua was the promised Messiah of Israel? On the contrary. We have several accounts that during Sha'ul's travels, when he came to a city, he would go to the one of the local synagogues on Shabbat to share with the local congregation the good news of Messiah.

"As they left, the people invited Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba to tell them more about these matters the following Shabbat. When the synagogue meeting broke up, many of the born Jews and devout proselytes followed Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba, who spoke with them and urged them to keep holding fast to the love and kindness of God. The next Shabbat, nearly the whole city gathered together to hear the message about the Lord; but when the Jews who had not believed saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and spoke up against what Sha'ul was saying and insulted him. However, Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba answered boldly: "It was necessary that God's word be spoken first to you. But since you are rejecting it and are judging yourselves unworthy of eternal life - why, we're turning to the Goyim! For that is what ADONAI has ordered us to do: 'I have set you as a light for the Goyim, to be for deliverance to the ends of the earth.' " Acts 13:42 - 47

Sha'ul's pattern of travel and visiting the local synagogues remained consistent in that we have other documented accounts found within the book of Acts:

- Acts 17:1 - 4
- Acts 18:4 - 5

In coming to a belief in Messiah, Sha'ul didn't throw away what he had known all his life. He was Jewish by birth, of the tribe of Benyimin. He wasn't teaching against Torah, but the legalistic misinterpretation of Torah and the burdensome addition of the oral law...the very system that he was once part of administering against his own Jewish countrymen:

"But if, in seeking to be declared righteous by God through our union with the Messiah, we ourselves are indeed found to be sinners, then is the Messiah an aider and abettor of sin? Heaven forbid! Indeed, if I build up again the legalistic bondage which I destroyed, I really do make myself a transgressor. For it was through letting the Torah

speaking for itself that I died to its traditional legalistic misinterpretation, so that I might live in direct relationship with God." Galatians 2: 17 - 19

How Did We Get to Sunday?

We posed the question at the beginning of this article...What Happened to the Sabbath? Now we ask another question that relates to our first question...How did we get to Sunday?

Isn't it odd that within the church the 10 commandments are the foundation of right and wrong for society, yet only nine are truly taught. The fourth commandment is included, yet not instructed...

"Remember the day, Shabbat, to set it apart for God. You have six days to labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Shabbat for ADONAI your God. On it, you are not to do any kind of work, not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your livestock, and not the foreigner staying with you inside the gates to your property. For in six days, ADONAI made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. This is why ADONAI blessed the day, Shabbat, and separated it for himself. Exodus 20:9 - 11

or sadly to say is conveyed as being Sunday.

The instruction given to Israel is specific, the seventh day. It includes the foreigner who has made a proclamation, similar to what we discussed earlier with Rahab and Ruth.

Some will state that from the beginning of its existence, the church has always come together on Sunday as we will see in some of the scriptures that are used to establish validity for Sunday. What is missing from the use of these scriptures is the perspective relating to the time in which these words were written and the context from which the writers were composing.

The beginning of the separation of the Jewish identity from the messianic community began its demise as early as 70 AD with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, leading to a shift in the power center for believers from Jerusalem to Alexandria, Egypt and finally settling in Rome.

The official separation of the Jewish heritage from the Messiah came at the Council of Nicea when the Roman empire under Constantine officially instituted "Christianity" as its official state religion. The 1967 edition of The Catholic Encyclopedia, when describing the final decision of the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, quotes the words of the Emperor Constantine, writing to all the churches:

“At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day And first of all it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin for we have received from our Saviour a different way...And I myself have undertaken that this decision should meet with the approval of your Sagacities in the hope that your Wisdoms will gladly admit that practice which is observed at once in the city of Rome and in Africa, throughout Italy and in Egypt...with entire unity of judgment.” (Vol. 5, p. 228). (note 3)

Canon 20 - Council of Nicea (325 CE)

"Forasmuch as there are certain persons who kneel on the Lord's Day (Sunday) and in the days of Pentecost, therefore, to the intent that all things may be uniformly observed everywhere (in every parish), it seems good to the holy Synod that prayer be made to God standing." (Source Catholic Encyclopedia)

From the Passover to the weekly Sabbath, a "united" decision was made to eliminate anything Jewish from the faith from which its very origins came. To say the decision was unified is open for debate. When you are confronted by the most powerful individual in the known world at the time - (the emperor or Rome), his minions of soldiers and leaders, would there truly be any dissension? This decision is nothing more than anti-semitism at its ugliest. Of the members present at this council, the Jewish bishops (numbering approximately 20) were not in attendance and for that matter not even invited to participate, further bringing into question the unity of this decision.

Canon 8 - Decision of the Second Council of Nicea (787 CE)

That Hebrews ought not to be received unless they have been converted in sincerity of heart.

Since certain , erring in the superstitions of the Hebrews , have thought to mock at Christ our God, and feigning to be converted to the religion of Christ do deny him, and in private and secretly keep the Sabbath and observe other Jewish customs, we decree that such persons be not received to communion , nor to prayers, nor into the Church; but let them be openly Hebrews according to their religion , and let them not bring their children to baptism, nor purchase or possess a slave . But if any of them, out of a sincere heart and in faith, is converted and makes profession with his whole heart, setting at naught their customs and observances, and so that others may be convinced and converted , such an one is to be received and baptized, and his children likewise; and let them be taught to take care to hold aloof from the ordinances of the Hebrews . But if they will not do this, let them in no way be received.

Ancient Epitome: Hebrews must not be received unless they are manifestly converted with sincerity of heart. (Source Catholic Encyclopedia)

The belief that anything Jewish, with a foundation in Torah, mocked God, was the thinking of the time. This thought process has continued for centuries with the notion that one who is Jewish must convert to christianity and denounce their Jewish heritage. Believe it or not, this thinking still exists today. The wall of partition that the Jewish community is accused of reestablishing is the very action being taken as a result of the second council at Nicea.

Other references from the Catholic Encyclopedia relating to the issue of Sabbath...

In the Apostolic Constitutions , which belong to the end of the fourth century, both the hearing of the Mass and the rest from work are prescribed, and the precept is attributed to the Apostles. The express teaching of Christ and St. Paul prevented the early Christians from falling into the excesses of Jewish Sabbatarianism in the observance of the Sunday, and yet we find St. Cæsarius of Arles in the sixth century teaching that the holy Doctors of the Church had decreed that the whole glory of the Jewish Sabbath had been transferred to the Sunday, and that Christians must keep the Sunday holy in the same way as the Jews had been commanded to keep holy the Sabbath Day. (Source Catholic Encyclopedia)

Although, as we have seen, the Church constituted a worship for itself, it nevertheless retained several memorials of the Jewish religion, which was a preparation for the Christian religion. But even here the originality and independence of the Christian worship are loudly affirmed. Thus the circumcision, which was the great sacrament of Judaism and as it were its distinctive sign, was rejected by the Church. The Temple of Jerusalem, the religious capital of Judaism, was deserted by the Christians, even by those of Jerusalem, and it was never the center of their worship. They loved to assemble in private houses to hear the Word, to pray, and to have the breaking of the bread. The Jewish feasts were likewise condemned. Neither the feast of Tabernacles , nor that of Lights, nor that of the Dedication , nor that of Purim left any trace in the Christian calendar. (Source Catholic Encyclopedia)

Easter and Pentecost , which kept their Jewish names and even, to a certain extent, their place on the Christian calendar, changed their object, one becoming the feast of the Resurrection and the other that of the Holy Ghost . But what is still more important, as has been said, is that the Church substituted Sunday for the Sabbath. The distinction between clean and unclean animals, which related to Jewish worship, was also rejected in the very beginning. On these questions, therefore, the Church asserted its independence. However, it borrowed certain things from the synagogue. It retained the Sacred Books as the most precious portion of its heritage and at once made them its liturgical books. For they are truly the core and the substance of the Christian liturgical books. The Church also borrowed from the Jews of the Diaspora the form of their meetings in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. At first the Christian meeting, like that of the synagogue, was taken up with the singing of psalms and the reading of the Sacred Books , followed by an exhortation or homily. These are the chief points of Jewish influence on Christian worship. (Source Catholic Encyclopedia)

The accounts above further emphasize the continuing and widening separation of faith in Messiah from its Jewish

origins. As time continued to pass, the division grew deeper. In order for a Jewish person to come to faith in Messiah, they would have to renounce all things Jewish. At certain times in history, they were forced to convert or die. Persecution continued for centuries...

- We were the black sheep of the world.
- We were viewed as the lowest form of life by other people.
- We were known as the ones who killed Jesus.
- We were a people without a land to call our own...no one wanted us.
- We were constantly being expelled from the countries we lived in.

The foundation of an anti-Jewish bias is firmly established within the church and its teachings. Centuries of erroneous teaching have deceived even the purest of heart believer in Messiah. The influence of seminaries and their teaching of these false concepts continue to fuel the misconceptions of faith and trust in Messiah. If He were to return today, would He even recognize His bride?

A passage that is most frequently used to support Sunday as the day believers come together is Acts 20:7 - 8, Many will use the King James version which reads as follows:

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together..." Acts 20:7 - 8 (King James Version)

The understanding of this passage, from a non-Jewish perspective gives the indication that they met on Sunday, the first day of the week. However, if that were truly the case then Sha'ul must have been full of energy to speak until midnight and then travel the next day.

When we look at the same verse from a Jewish perspective, we receive a better understanding:

"On Motza'ei-Shabbat, when we were gathered to break bread, Sha'ul addressed them. Since he was going to leave the next day, he kept talking until midnight. Now there were many oil lamps burning in the upstairs room where we were meeting..." Acts 20:7 - 8 (Complete Jewish Bible)

David Stern uses the term "Motza'ei-Shabbat" which means going out of the Sabbath, the ending of the Sabbath (Saturday night).

The foundation for the Jewish approach of day beginning at sundown originates from creation. Witness the last verse of the passage below...

"Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, in the likeness of ourselves; and let them rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the animals, and over all the earth, and over every crawling creature that crawls on the earth." So God created humankind in his own image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them. God blessed them: God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature that crawls on the earth." Then God said, "Here! Throughout the whole earth I am giving you as food every seed-bearing plant and every tree with seed-bearing fruit. And to every wild animal, bird in the air and creature crawling on the earth, in which there is a living soul, I am giving as food every kind of green plant." And that is how it was. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good. So there was evening, and there was morning, a sixth day." Genesis 1:26 - 31

Evening then morning...the order by which God created everything, hence the order of our 24 hour day comprises evening and morning - the Jewish perspective. With the origin of the messianic community being Jewish, we must view scripture from the perspective and context from which it was written.

The Future and the Sabbath

Written to believers in the book of Hebrews..."their remains a Sabbath", indicates a present tense to the statement made in Hebrews 4:10

"Today, if you hear God's voice, don't harden your hearts." For if Y'hoshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later of another "day." So there remains a Shabbat-keeping for God's people.

Therefore, if there is still a Sabbath for believers after Messiah had come, then there is still a Sabbath in the future for when He will return. The difference being, now the Sabbath is open to all who are part of Messiah.

"Here is what ADONAI says: "Observe justice, do what is right, for my salvation is close to coming, my righteousness to being revealed." Happy is the person who does this, anyone who grasps it firmly, who keeps Shabbat and does not profane it, and keeps himself from doing any evil. For here is what ADONAI says: "As for the eunuchs who keep my Shabbats, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant:" Isaiah 56:1 - 2

For the Jewish person, whether believer or not, the decision is clear. The Sabbath was given to Israel as a sign of the covenant God made with them and therefore remains, because it is eternal. There is a blessing that leads to Joy.

For the non-Jewish believer (foreigner) who comes along side Israel, and is the wild olive tree branch grafted into the cultivated olive tree known as Israel, it is a choice with a blessing. If they choose what pleases Adonai:

"A foreigner joining ADONAI should not say, "ADONAI will separate me from his people"; likewise the eunuch should not say, "I am only a dried-up tree." As for the eunuchs who keep my Shabbats, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant: in my house, within my walls, I will give them power and a name greater than sons and daughters; I will give him an everlasting name that will not be cut off. "And the foreigners who join themselves to ADONAI to serve him, to love the name of ADONAI, and to be his workers, all who keep Shabbat and do not profane it, and hold fast to my covenant, I will bring them to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Isaiah 56:4 - 7

Jewish and non-Jewish together as one in Messiah. A unification of peoples that were once separated. Sha'ul conveying to believers at Ephesus:

"Always be humble, gentle and patient, bearing with one another in love, and making every effort to preserve the unity the Spirit gives through the binding power of shalom. There is one body and one Spirit, just as when you were called you were called to one hope. And there is one Lord, one trust, one immersion, and one God, the Father of all, who rules over all, works through all and is in all." Ephesians 4:2 - 6

There are not two paths...one for Jewish people and one for non-Jewish people. The erroneous teachings of many have lead to a wall of partition (separation) being reconstructed again! I write this with a heavy heart and mean no disrespect to those who are true of heart, but it is unfortunate that the motives that got us here were that of hatred towards the Jewish people. The manner by which we arrived at this place of separation doesn't mean that what has transpired in the past can't be corrected today to change the future. Whether now, or when Messiah returns, all things will be made right. Because when all is said and done, there will continue to be a Sabbath for all:

"For just as the new heavens and the new earth that I am making will continue in my presence," says ADONAI, "so will your descendants and your name continue. "Every month on Rosh-Hodesh and every week on Shabbat, everyone living will come to worship in my presence," says ADONAI. "As they leave, they will look on the corpses of the people who rebelled against me. For their worm will never die, and their fire will never be quenched; but they will be abhorrent to all humanity." ["Every month on Rosh-Hodesh and every week on Shabbat, everyone living will come to worship in my presence," says ADONAI." Isaiah 66:22 - 24

The new heaven and the new earth we is also found at the end of Revelation...

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer there. Also I saw the holy city, New Yerushalayim, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "See! God's Sh'khinah is with mankind, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and he himself, God-with-them, will be their God." Revelation 21:1 - 3

"Every month on Rosh-Hodesh and every week on Shabbat, everyone living will come to worship in my presence," says ADONAI."

Everyone living...Jewish and non-Jewish will come on Shabbat to worship Adonai. Seems quite clear. no wiggle room for misinterpretation.

Conclusion

What is a believer to do?

It is unfortunate but there is one page (with two words) in scripture that disrupts the flow of the Revelation of God and His relationship with the children of Israel. That page is the page that separates the Tenach from the Brith Hadashah. In most Bibles that page says "new testament" Granted they are scriptures that relate to the new covenant, however,

through the centuries, this one page in combination with a diminished to non-existent understanding of scripture from a Jewish perspective has completely flip flopped the perspective of God's Word and its true meaning and understanding...thus reestablishing that middle wall of partition. This partition is now from the view of non-Jewish believers in Messiah...the other side if you will.

Without question, the view of what the Sabbath means today is completely contrary to scripture in its proper context. Today, the view of the Sabbath is that it is no longer relevant..."old testament", "legalistic" for the Jewish people only. It is further understood that anything Jewish is no longer applicable under the "new testatment".

This mindset couldn't be any further from the truth. This mindset is a result of the brief historical presentation we have shown regarding the relationship between the Jewish people and the church. This mindset is beginning to change. However, the change is slow, because the longer something is established, the longer it takes to correct. The growth of Messianic congregations throughout the world are helping to promote this change. Messianic Jewish Synagogues comprise both Jewish and non-Jewish believers with a unity in Messiah and the desire to retain God's instructions in honoring the Sabbath and keeping it holy.

There is an excellent book that goes into much greater detail with regards to the relationship between the Jewish people and the church:

"The Church and The Jews - The Biblical Relationship" by Dan Gruber

"Come to me, all of you who are struggling and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28 - 30

The misunderstanding of scripture continues with this section above. The burden isn't Torah or its commandments, but rather the misinterpretation and legalistic additions that Yeshua is addressing. In context, Torah is liberation, it is Holy, it is just. The passage that follows this scripture in Matthew 12 shows Yeshua addressing these very issues regarding Shabbat that we have presented...the legalistic interpretation of what Shabbat had become in relation to what God had intended it to be.

Honoring and keeping the Sabbath holy as God intended is not legalism as many have been taught and ultimately have come to believe. It is a way in honoring God through what has been given, specifically as a commandment to Israel. However, there is an open invitation through the grafting in of non-Jewish believers in Messiah to the tree that is Israel...now the commonwealth of Israel. This is probably one of the greatest misunderstood concepts found among believers today.

The Commonwealth of Israel is comprised of Jewish and non-Jewish people who are reconciled by a trust in Messiah. The constitution of the Commonwealth of Israel is comprised of the Tenach and Brith Hadosah (one continuous and complete document) as its foundation. It contains all the information believers require. This constitution is not ratified by a vote of men, but by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and sealed through Messiah.

When understood from a proper perspective, keeping Shabbat is intended for all believers. It is what separates God's people from the rest of the world, then and today. Not from a legalistic perspective, but from a true trusting of God in refraining from our occupational striving in providing for our family. We refrain from work for one day and work for six. In essence, you can consider this to be a tithe of our time, specifically setting aside a day for the sole purpose of rest and therefore being able to focus on Adonai.

How Do We Define Work?

Therefore, the question has probably entered your mind at some point during this article...what exactly is work? How can we define it from a perspective whereby we can honor the Sabbath and keep it holy? Without being labeled as legalistic, it is simply put, your occupation whereby you strive to provide for your family. The times have changed, whereby, we as a society have progressed to the point that not all work is physically draining and extremely laborious, but may also be mentally and emotionally draining. Regardless of the task, we should cease our efforts from economic endeavors with the intention of resting from our weekly grind and giving this time back to God in worship through the gathering together of believers as a unified body in Messiah. From the Jewish perspective, the highest form of worship is considered the reading and studying of God's Word.

The Sabbath is...

- A statement for creation vs. any other theory created by man.
- The Sabbath (seventh day) is the only day sanctified by God - set apart as being holy.
- A memorial of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage

- A sign of the covenant God made with Israel - A gift! - no other nation or people were given instruction regarding God's Sabbath
- A Joy
- Eternal

Below are two examples of how the joy of the Sabbath is viewed. One is from Psalm 92 and the other, a song written by Steve & Sue McConnell.

Psalm 92 - A psalm. A song for Shabbat:

- 1 A psalm. A song for Shabbat: It is good to give thanks to ADONAI and sing praises to your name, 'Elyon,
- 2 to tell in the morning about your grace and at night about your faithfulness,
- 3 to the music of a ten-stringed [harp] and a lute, with the melody sounding on a lyre.
- 4 For, ADONAI, what you do makes me happy; I take joy in what your hands have made.
- 5 How great are your deeds, ADONAI! How very deep your thoughts!
- 6 Stupid people can't know, fools don't understand,
- 7 that when the wicked sprout like grass, and all who do evil prosper, it is so that they can be eternally destroyed,
- 8 while you, ADONAI, are exalted forever.
- 9 For your enemies, ADONAI, your enemies will perish; all evildoers will be scattered.
- 10 But you have given me the strength of a wild bull; you anoint me with fresh olive oil.
- 11 My eyes have gazed with pleasure on my enemies' ruin, my ears have delighted in the fall of my foes.
- 12 The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar in the L'vanon.
- 13 Planted in the house of ADONAI, they will flourish in the courtyards of our God.
- 14 Even in old age they will be vigorous, still full of sap, still bearing fruit,
- 15 proclaiming that ADONAI is upright, my Rock, in whom there is no wrong.

Witness the words of the song below, composed by Steve & Sue McConnell, Jewish believers in Messiah:

WE DELIGHT IN YOUR SHABBAT

Avinu Malkeynu our Father our King

Lord we Delight in Your Shabbat!

We enter Your rest and Your praises we sing!

Lord we Delight in Your Shabbat!

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

In six days You painted the face of the earth

And carved out a day when You'd rest from Your work

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

You brought forth a nation from Abraham

And spared his son Isaac providing the ram

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

The prophets foretold that Messiah would come

Sh'ma Yisrael the L-rd G-d is one!

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

And just as You rested when Your work was done

We enter Your rest by the Work of Your Son

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

The lilies You dress and the sparrows You feed

You Elohim provide every need!

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

Your people will enter Your rest when we cry

"Baruch ha ba b'Shem Adonai!"

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

We delight, we delight, we delight in Your Shabbat!

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Babylonian Talmud

Legend

Color Type	Indication
Blue	Bible Text
Red	Bible Text referencing Yeshua speaking
Black	General Text

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