

## The Sabbath Day

*By Joshua Finch*

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All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version of the Bible unless otherwise stated.  
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*Substitution of the holy Names in all quotations has been made at the discretion of the author*

### **Foreword**

In the second chapter of the Bible we read that having created the heavens and the earth in six days, on the seventh day the Almighty rested from all His work, declaring it to be a holy day with a special blessing on it.<sup>1</sup> Was this because He had grown tired? I think not. When the living Word that had brought everything into existence in the first place became flesh and walked on the face of the earth,<sup>2</sup> He declared that the Sabbath had been created specifically for the pinnacle of His creation, man.<sup>3</sup>

Christians today could be said to fall into three camps with regard to the observance of a Sabbath day. Firstly there are those who believe that in the New Testament era every day is the day of the Lord and so every day is a day in which we live and work for Him; the Sabbath is therefore an unnecessary legalistic weight. Then there are those who take the more traditional approach to Sunday as being the Lord's day to be observed by a cessation of work and attendance of a church service of some kind. A growing number of believers today are becoming dissatisfied with both these interpretations of the fourth commandment<sup>4</sup> and in seeking to return to the Hebraic roots of the faith have begun to observe the Sabbath on Saturday on the same day as the Jewish people (including Yahshua the Messiah) throughout the world have done for 3500 years. Our purpose in writing this booklet is not to point a condemnatory finger at any sincere believer and his viewpoint but to demonstrate from the Scriptures and our own experience that the blessing Yahweh set into the seventh day of the week is still there if one takes the trouble to look for it. There is a strong body of evidence both in the Scriptures and from history to suggest that the earliest believers continued to observe and enjoy a Sabbath day of rest on a Saturday. I commend the writings of my friend Joshua to you as food for thought.

### **The Editor**

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2:2-3

<sup>2</sup> John 1:1-3,14

<sup>3</sup> Mark 2:27

<sup>4</sup> Exod. 20:8

## Introduction

We live in a world where 'time is of the essence', a world where mankind increasingly invests *time* in the pursuit of material and personal gain. In our advanced technical civilisation time is critical. To achieve our goals we fill our lives with activity. The Scriptures teach us however that there is more to life than this. A J Heshel wrote: "*there is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord.*"<sup>1</sup> The Sabbath<sup>2</sup> day is just such a time. Six days throughout the week we are commanded to work<sup>3</sup> and work we must if we wish to cover the costs of daily living, put food on the table and provide for our families. The Sabbath is a time when we can rest from the rigours of our weekly labours and celebrate the holiness of Yahweh.

Holiness is the character of Yahweh and the first time the word 'holy' is ever used in the Bible is in relation to the Sabbath day.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, in some special way, the Sabbath reflects the holiness of the Heavenly Father. Furthermore, to *celebrate the Sabbath* is to adore something that we do not see; it is to adore the spirit of a divine sacred time. Biblical teachers in the past, when describing the Sabbath, have personified it as a Queen adorned in her beauty, as a Bride entering into the bridal chamber and as a royal King. This was to allude *'to the fact that its spirit is a reality'*.<sup>5</sup> Its spirit and enjoyment is a revelation and a partaking of part of the sacredness of Yahweh.

The observance of this day is far more than a ritualistic fulfilment of a commandment of Yahweh in our world, in which the soul of mankind can take rest.

The philosopher and historian, Philo, wrote about the Sabbath, "*its object is ...to give man relaxation from continuous and unending toil and by refreshing their bodies with a regular calculated system of remissions and to send them out renewed to their old activities.*"<sup>6</sup> As Philo upholds, the *'Sabbath was made for man'*<sup>7</sup> to delight in, and to receive sustenance from, yet it also has a higher essential purpose, that is, to portray through its ordinances and imagery, a picture of heavenly things. A world without the Sabbath would be one lacking the depths of that visionary window, which looks forward to eternity's divinely given rest in the Messiah; it would be a world without a hope. Above this, the Sabbath teaches all mankind one of the fundamental reasons for his existence – to worship and serve Yahweh.

The Sabbath is entirely spiritual in nature; a time of holiness and a gift in which heaven and earth unite in peaceful harmony. This day invites mankind to commit himself to a hallowed time of fellowship with the Divine.

Let us now look at a little of what the Scriptures have to teach about the significance of this day.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Sabbath*, Abraham Joshua Heshel

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew: Shabbat meaning 'to cease' or 'to rest' on the seventh day of the week (Saturday) in accordance with Gen. 2:2-3

<sup>3</sup> Exod. 20:8

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 2:3 'sanctified', Hebrew 'quodesh' translated as holy throughout the Old Testament, as in Exod. 20:8

<sup>5</sup> *The Sabbath*, Abraham Joshua Heshel

<sup>6</sup> Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, II, 60 (*Loeb Classics, Philo, VII*)

<sup>7</sup> Mark 2:27

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### Quest for Truth: The Sabbath Day

## ***Sabbath before Sinai***

Many considered the observance of Sabbath as something that relates only to Israel and their observance of the law of Moses. The Sabbath day, however, like all of Yahweh's timeless principles, was in existence and was observed a long time before Moses and the giving of the Ten Commandments.

In Genesis 2:1-3 Yahweh had completed the creation of the heavens and the earth on the sixth day. Then *“by the seventh day [Elohim] had finished the work he had been doing ... he rested from all his work.”* Yahweh rested on the seventh day of the week. This would establish the pattern for future generations concerning the Sabbath day; a day in which we rest from our labours and give thanks and praise to Yahweh for His wonderful creative work.

Furthermore we read that Yahweh *“...blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.”*<sup>1</sup> We see from this scripture that Yahweh invoked a blessing on the Sabbath that, like all His creation, still exists today. In sanctifying it, He set it apart from all the other days of the week. It is special to Him because He made it so.

In Exodus 16:1-30 we read of the children of Israel who had been redeemed out of Egypt and were heading towards Mount Sinai to meet Yahweh. Israel was murmuring to Moses, their leader, because they were hungry. Yahweh heard them and provided *‘bread from heaven’,*<sup>2</sup> also known as ‘manna’. Each morning the food would be outside their tents and they were to gather it in. The children of Israel gathered the food daily for five days each week but on the sixth day a double portion was to be collected because of the Sabbath rest. Sadly, some of the Israelites neglected this instruction of Yahweh. Therefore, He said, *“...[Yahweh] has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days’ ...so the people rested on the seventh day.”*<sup>3</sup> There is something very positive about the words *‘Yahweh has given’* in this verse. We discover that the Sabbath is a *gift* given in Fatherly love to His people. Divine love really is the basis of this *gift* of rest, as Dr. Clifford Denton writes, *‘they(the commandments) are like a colourful spectrum, from the highest heavenly perspective to a most sensitive earthly perspective...from the heights of heaven to the low place on earth through love’.*<sup>4</sup>

## ***Sabbath after Sinai***

The children of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai where the Law<sup>5</sup> of Yahweh was revealed to them. Exodus 20 informs us about the great Ten Commandments, one of which concerned the Sabbath day. *“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to [Yahweh] your [Elohim]...”*<sup>6</sup> Israel was to rest on this day from all their work.<sup>7</sup> This included any cooking that involved lighting a fire.<sup>8</sup> They were also commanded not to buy or sell on this day.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2:3 A.V.

<sup>2</sup> John 6:32

<sup>3</sup> Exod. 16:29-30

<sup>4</sup> Tishrei Publications, The Love of God in the Torah of God

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew = teaching, guidance or instruction

<sup>6</sup> Exod. 20:8-11

<sup>7</sup> Exod. 31:12-18

<sup>8</sup> Exod. 35:3

<sup>9</sup> Neh. 13:15-22

Think for a moment how this would affect our lives today. It required true faith and a deep love of Yahweh for Israel to follow the guidelines He laid out for them.

There were also non-Israelites who joined themselves to Israel and kept the Sabbath.<sup>1</sup> These people were to be regarded as ‘*native-born Israelites*’.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 56:6-7 tells us of numerous blessing that will come upon Gentiles for keeping this day holy: “... *These I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy 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 nations.*”

There is a further promise in Isaiah 58:13-14: “*If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and [Yahweh’s] holy day honourable, and if you honour it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in [Yahweh], and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob’. The mouth of [Yahweh] has spoken.*”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the Sabbath is a delight to both our bodies and souls. For six days the body has been under the rigours of work, and is affected by the meals and clothes related to our employment. Yet on the Sabbath we have the privilege of sanctifying a special choice of meals and garments in loving harmony with Yahweh’s own words, ‘*keep it holy*’. We may delight our souls with the pleasures of things appertaining to holiness, and rest. Truly, this day is one of freedom and joy.

All these blessings did come upon Israel until they turned away from Yahweh’s teaching and consequently from Yahweh Himself. After king Solomon’s reign over the Israelite nation they fell away from the guidance of Yahweh. This happened over a process of time. With the kingdom divided, Israel formed what historians or scholars call a *syncretistic religion*, that is, they *mixed* paganism with their former true teachings. As well as other gods they worshipped Yahweh but through idols, which was an abomination to Yahweh.<sup>4</sup> In such a state of compromise even their Sabbath days were not acceptable in Yahweh’s sight. “... *Your incense is detestable to me. New moons, Sabbaths and convocations – I cannot bear your evil assemblies... Take your evil deeds out of my sight!*”<sup>5</sup> It was not that the new moons or Sabbaths in themselves were an abomination but it was rather the mixture of religion that Yahweh considered so vile. Yahweh had revealed to Israel His guidelines for worship and service. He required this purity, but they had profaned it.<sup>6</sup> It would take repentance<sup>7</sup> to reconcile Israel to Yahweh again. This turning back and restoration of relationship meant to turn to the instructions of Yahweh once more.

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<sup>1</sup> Lev. 24:22; Num. 15:15,16

<sup>2</sup> Eze. 47:22,23

<sup>3</sup> Isa. 58:13,14

<sup>4</sup> Exod. 20:3-5; Deut. 18:9

<sup>5</sup> Isa. 1:13-17

<sup>6</sup> cp Eze. 20:21

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew: to turn back, to restore

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### Quest for Truth: The Sabbath Day

## ***Sabbath and the New Testament***

### **Pharisaic misinterpretations of the Law**

Judas Maccabbeus (160-143 B.C.E.) liberated the Judaeans from the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes who had been trying to force them to abandon their faith.<sup>1</sup> Just after this time *‘two religious parties were formed within the Synagogue – the Pharisees and the Sadducees’*.<sup>2</sup> These parties comprised the ‘Sanhedrin’, a Jewish court of law. This court formed a system of rules and regulations concerning the application of the Torah\* to the lives of the people of Israel. These rules and regulations are known as the *‘traditions of the elders’*.<sup>3</sup>

These traditions were introduced out of a genuine concern for Israel – the rabbis called it ‘putting a hedge around the Torah’. Therefore, even if Israel disobeyed one of the traditions they would not transgress Yahweh’s Law. In theory the hedge, or tradition, was meant to protect the instruction of Yahweh. In practice, many of the rabbinic rules and regulations broke the commandments of Yahweh,<sup>4</sup> evolving into a form of legalism.

In the Western world we think of work in terms of the amount of energy expended, but not so from a rabbinic viewpoint. According to Jewish teaching there are various kinds of work, *‘those kinds which were forbidden on the Sabbath were forbidden in any amount’*.<sup>5</sup> According to pharisaism, for example, a person could not spit on the ground during the Sabbath because this was violating the command not to plough. Nor could people walk through the grass for fear of breaking the command of threshing on the Sabbath. Therefore, we see that one aspect misinterpreted by the Pharisees and Sadducees was the Sabbath rest.<sup>6</sup> There was a need for this misinterpretation to be rectified.

\*Torah: Hebrew term referring to the first five books of the bible

### **Yahshua and the Sabbath**

Yahshua was the One who brought a balanced understanding to the Sabbath. Sometimes this contradicted the pharisaical teaching but nevertheless Yahshua’s teaching was correct. For example, Yahshua healed on the Sabbath even when it broke the *‘traditions of the elders’*.<sup>7</sup> Let us look at just one such instance: In Luke 13:10-17 Yahshua healed a crippled woman on the Sabbath. He was ridiculed by the *‘synagogue ruler’* who *“said to the people, ‘There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.’”* This was hypocritical because even the Pharisee would *“untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water”* on the Sabbath. In other words, in less serious circumstances even the rabbis broke their own laws; so how much more could Yahshua break **rabbinic** law for the sake of healing a cripple. Yahshua pointed out that some Pharisees often laid a heavy load on mankind which they would not lay on animals. Indeed while Yahshua broke many rabbinic interpretations of what is and what is not work on the Sabbath, He did not once break the

<sup>1</sup> See the Apocrypha

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 15:2

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 15:3

<sup>5</sup> Arye Powlison, My Law on your Heart

<sup>6</sup> See Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Sabbath; for examples

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 12:9-14; Luke 4:31-35

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law of Yahweh. Yahshua rebuked the Pharisees for their emphasis on outward show while missing out the 'important matters' such as 'justice, mercy and faithfulness'.<sup>1</sup> It must be noted in all this that Yahshua did not break the Sabbath day but He kept it faithfully as Yahweh had decreed. His purpose was not to change the original teaching of the Sabbath but to rectify its pharisaic misinterpretations.

### **Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath**

In Matthew 12:1-8 and Mark 2:23-28 Yahshua's disciples had just been accused of breaking rabbinic law by walking through a field (threshing) and rubbing corn in their hands (reaping). The Pharisees forbade these two types of work on the Sabbath. Yahshua defended their actions because they were hungry and they were serving One greater than the Temple on this Sabbath day. Yahshua rebuked the Pharisees for being legalistic and missing out one of the Law's foundational principles of 'mercy'. Then the writer of Mark's Gospel says, "*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.*" This puts Yahshua, who frequently referred to Himself as the Son of Man, firmly at the centre of this day.

In the light of recent studies it has been found that the term 'Son of Man' as well as a term used for Messiah, is an Hebraic idiom meaning 'human being' or 'mankind'.<sup>2</sup> In view of this, an alternative explanation presents itself. The Talmud, a Jewish Commentary on the Bible says something very similar, "*For it [Sabbath] is holy unto you (Exod. 31:14) That is, it is committed into your hands, not you into its hands.*"<sup>3</sup> In this way Yahshua could be saying that the Sabbath serves the needs of mankind, not the other way around. This implies that mankind is free to determine for himself what should be considered appropriate in relation to Sabbath day observance. It is important to understand that this apparent liberty must not be mistaken for laxity in relation to the Sabbath observance. The work that the disciples did perform on the Sabbath day in Matthew 12:1-8, although contrary to rabbinic tradition, was still within the framework of the Law, and Yahshua gives two examples to back this up.

### **The Disciples and the Sabbath**

We have seen that Yahshua did not change the Sabbath in any way but He did rectify its 1<sup>st</sup> Century misinterpretations. In fact He confirmed that in the last days the Sabbath would still be in force.<sup>4</sup> His disciples were Sabbath keepers: they took His body down from the stake because of the High\* Sabbath;<sup>5</sup> they waited until after the Sabbath to prepare His body for burial.<sup>6</sup> There is no evidence here to say that the Sabbath changed after the death and resurrection of Yahshua. Rather it is confirmed that the disciples continued observing the normal weekly Sabbath after the resurrection.

\* High Sabbath: There were two Sabbaths during the week that Yahshua was crucified. This one refers to the Feast of Passover Sabbath.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 23:23

<sup>2</sup> Dr David Stern, JNTC; My Law on your Heart; Talmud Mekhilta Shabbata I.1 on Exodus 31:12-17

<sup>3</sup> Yoma 85b

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 24:20

<sup>5</sup> Mark 15:42-45

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 28:1; Luke 23:56

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### **Quest for Truth: The Sabbath Day**

## The Apostles and Sabbath

The apostle Peter was a part of the Jerusalem church that observed the Sabbath along with the rest of the early believers. Yet how did the apostle Paul view the Sabbath after he had come to faith in Messiah Yahshua? Upon reading Acts it becomes quite clear that he still loved to keep the Sabbath after his belief in Yahshua.<sup>1</sup> Also, Acts 15:19, 21 indicates that if Gentiles wanted to go deeper into the roots of their faith then they could go to the synagogue to learn about the Law on the Sabbath day. There are some statements that Paul makes in the New Covenant scriptures concerning the Sabbath that seem quite vague or even contradictory. However once placed in their historical, cultural and linguistic context these statements become clear and again uphold the continued significance and holiness of it.

It is important to know that the apostle Paul wrote, “So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.”<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul claimed to be one who kept the Law. This would imply that he valued all that the Sabbath day meant to both body and soul.<sup>3</sup> Some believe that Paul actively dissuaded Jewish believers from observing the Sabbath, but this was clearly not the case.<sup>4</sup>

## Sabbath from 1<sup>st</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Century

From our consideration so far, we can deduce that the Sabbath is a day of holiness, peace, and celebration. A period where this time is cherished, and one’s fellowship with Yahweh is to be fully enjoyed. Israel, Yahshua, and His disciples all entered into the blessing this day brought, yet how did the disciples throughout the centuries consider the day? Did they take advantage of the joy, holiness, and freedom of this most sacred day?

“From the apostles’ time until the council of Laodicea, which was about the year 364, the holy observation of the Jews’ Sabbath continued, as may be proved by the many authors...notwithstanding the decree against it.”<sup>5</sup> The Saturday Sabbath was observed by believers, both Jew and Gentile in ‘Oriental churches, and the greatest part of the world’<sup>6</sup> up until about 364 C.E. Socrates tells us that believers eventually assembled on the Sabbath ‘as well as on the first day of the week ...’<sup>7</sup> Sadly, Pope Gregory wrongly ‘denounced people as the prophets of Antichrist those who maintained that work ought not to be done on the seventh day’.<sup>8</sup> This escalated to such a point that the Roman Catholic church sought to change the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. In the *Faith of our Fathers*, Cardinal Gibbons writes, “You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and you will not find a single line authorising the sanctification of Sunday. The scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.” Nevertheless there were still some faithful people who followed the day of rest according to the Bible. In the Celtic churches, in Ireland as well as Scotland, the Saturday Sabbath was observed up until Mary Queen of Scots gained power.<sup>9</sup> The Abyssinians, the

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 18:4

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 15:4

<sup>3</sup> Acts 25:8

<sup>4</sup> Acts 21:21-24

<sup>5</sup> *Sunday a Sabbath?*, John Ley, London 1640

<sup>6</sup> *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Vol II, Book XX, Chap. 3, Sec. 1 66. 1137, 1138

<sup>7</sup> *Socrates, Ecclesiastical History*, Book 7, chap 19

<sup>8</sup> James T. Ringgold, *The Law of Sunday*

<sup>9</sup> Prof. James C. Moffatt, D.D., *The Church of Scotland*

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Jacobites, the Marionites, and the Armenians who broke off from Rome kept the Sabbath day holy.<sup>1</sup> In the 11<sup>th</sup> Century the Celts *'held that Saturday was properly the Sabbath on which they abstained from work'*.<sup>2</sup> In the 12<sup>th</sup> Century the *'Sabbath prevailed in Wales universally until A.D. 1150...they...did not...bow the knee to Rome'*.<sup>3</sup> During the 15<sup>th</sup> Century many believers in Norway were reproved by the Catholic church for keeping the Saturday Sabbath. They were instructed to only follow that which the *'church canon commands'*.<sup>4</sup> The Council of Trent on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 1563, ruled that church *'tradition is greater than Scripture'*; this was made manifest in how the *'church had **changed** the Fourth Commandment'*.<sup>5</sup> In the early 1500's in Holland, Germany and Russia people were martyred for keeping the seventh day Sabbath holy.<sup>6</sup> In India the Jesuits set up an inquisition to root out the Sabbath keepers.<sup>7</sup> In England during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century there were *'nine or ten churches that keep the Sabbath besides many scattered disciples'*.<sup>8</sup> Gravestones have been found commemorating people for being Christian and keeping the seventh day Sabbath. In 1760 in Rumania people *'lost all of their possessions'* for keeping the Sabbath. From 1635 to 1867 the writings of Bohemian and Moravian believers who kept the Sabbath *'became the spoil of flames'*.<sup>9</sup> Christians who observed the Sabbath have been found in American historical records throughout the centuries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Taipings in China were asked why they kept the seventh day Sabbath, in reply they said, *'because the Bible taught it, and second, because their ancestors observed it as a day of worship'*.<sup>10</sup> Also in a document entitled Evangelism, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1863, p169: Swedish believers wrote *"We will now endeavour to show that the sanctification of the Sabbath has its foundation and its origin in a law which God at creation Himself established for the whole world."*

Therefore, although there has seemed to be a spiritual struggle throughout the centuries over this time of holiness, there has always, throughout the centuries, been a faithful remnant who have seen fit to obey Yahweh rather than man.

Yahshua rebuked the Pharisees for making void the Torah with their traditions, and it seems much of the church has made a similar mistake with its traditions.<sup>11</sup> Today in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century there are many people in all nations coming into the revelation of Yahweh's true Sabbath day.

Yet it must be noted that many people have kept the Sabbath rest on a Sunday over the years out of pure ignorance, not realising the events of history surrounding this day. Yahweh will bless such people, because after seeing the principle of a time of rest within the Bible, they have separated a day unto Him. Nevertheless, today there is a *'process of restoration going on within the Church, taking us back to the original foundations of the Faith'*, and we all can be a part of this great move of Yahweh.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The New Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, art. Nestorians & Realencyclopaedic fur Protestantische Theologie und Kirche, art. Nestorianer

<sup>2</sup> *Celtic Scotland*, Vol 2

<sup>3</sup> *Lewis, Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, Vol 1*

<sup>4</sup> Catholic Provincial Council at Bergen. 1435. Dip. Norveg., 7, 397

<sup>5</sup> H.J. Holtzman, Kanon und Tradition, 1859 edition, p263

<sup>6</sup> The Dutch, T.J Van Braght, London 1850, 1, pp113-4;H. Sternberf, Geshichte der Juden (Liepzig, 1873), pp117-122; Bishop Anjou, Svenska Kirkans Historia efter Motei i Upsala

<sup>7</sup> *Adeny, The Greek and Eastern Churches*, p527-528

<sup>8</sup> Stennet's letters, 1668 and 1670. Cox. Sab., 1,268

<sup>9</sup> Adolf Dux, Aus Ungarn, pp2889-291, Leinzig. 1880

<sup>10</sup> A Critical History of the Sabbath and the Sunday

<sup>11</sup> Mark. 7:6-8

<sup>12</sup> Dr Clifford Denton, Cambrian Bible College Prospectus

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## ***Sabbath and Prophecy***

As well as the many practical benefits in Sabbath keeping there are also a lot of prophetic lessons we can learn. For example, by taking the scriptures, “*For in six days [Yahweh] made the heavens and earth...*”<sup>1</sup> “*And [Yahweh] blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested...*”<sup>2</sup> we see that Elohim worked for six days and rested on the seventh. This is a prophetic shadow of the millennial rule of Messiah Yahshua. Hence, typologically, “*With [Yahweh] a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day*”<sup>3</sup> so taking a day as a thousand years we see that Elohim has been working for man’s redemption for six days since creation (ie several thousand years). In the seventh day (a thousand year period) He will rest and “*...the earth will be full of the knowledge of [Yahweh] as the waters cover the sea*”<sup>4</sup> and “*...they came to life and reigned with [Messiah] a thousand years.*”<sup>5</sup> \*When the Messiah returns **all** people will keep the Sabbath holy,<sup>6</sup> but why wait till then when we can receive the blessing now? This day is also a foreshadow of Yahshua the Messiah who said, “*...I will give you rest*”<sup>7</sup> and He is our eternal rest. Yet there is still a Sabbath ‘rest’ to come for the people of Yahweh.<sup>8</sup>

\*Editors note:

This is not intended to be a prediction as to the exact time of Messiah’s return!

## ***How to Observe the Sabbath Day***

Today with the rise of the sabbatarian groups and the Messianic movement with numerous Sabbath day meetings taking place, it is easy to think we are observing the Sabbath by attending church on Saturday. This is not the case, because keeping Sabbath is *a way of life* revealed by *how we live* on the seventh day of the week.

*If we are led by the Holy Spirit, from a foundation of true faith, to keep the Sabbath day holy, then we need to seek Yahweh, through prayer, to guide us. It is important to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into a balanced walk, because without His input, legalism will ensue. The basic instructions are laid out for us in scripture: We should cease from our weekly work on this day;<sup>9</sup> lighting a fire is prohibited;<sup>10</sup> we should not buy or sell.<sup>11</sup> It is not a day just to say and do as we please but to set apart to Yahweh.<sup>12</sup> These are basic*

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<sup>1</sup> Exod. 20:11

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 2:3

<sup>3</sup> 2 Pet. 3:8

<sup>4</sup> Isa. 11:9

<sup>5</sup> Rev. 20:4

<sup>6</sup> Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 66:23

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 11:28

<sup>8</sup> Heb. 4:9; Greek: Rest = Sabbatismos = ‘Sabbath Celebration’. This word is used only once in the New Covenant. It portrays that the *physical ‘Sabbath Rest’ [Sabbatismos] is the weekly outward manifestation of the inner experience of spiritual rest [katapausis] in which the final...rest is...experienced already ‘today’* The Anchor Bible Dictionary

<sup>9</sup> Exod. 16:1-30; 20:8-11; 31:12-17

<sup>10</sup> Exod. 35:3

<sup>11</sup> Neh. 13:15-22

<sup>12</sup> Isa. 58:13

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### **Quest for Truth: The Sabbath Day**

teachings from the Old Testament but, in our consideration so far, we have unearthed some further clarification specifically from the words of Yahshua:

a) *“The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”*<sup>1</sup> Thus a true understanding of what Sabbath should be must be borne from a relationship with Yahshua and serving Him as Lord of your own life.

b) *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”*<sup>2</sup> If we are not being enriched in our spiritual lives and finding delight in what we do on this day then we have missed the whole point of it.<sup>3</sup>

c) Yahshua also made reference to the possible need to pull our sheep out of the ditch on a Sabbath day.<sup>4</sup> Life is full of unplanned surprises, which may require us to set to work. The essential work of a doctor or policeman could be viewed under this category.

Now how might these guidelines be applied? Should we choose to incorporate the Sabbath day into our modern lifestyle? If our job does not directly involve delivering people’s lives<sup>5</sup> then we might have to seek Yahweh for His will concerning our employment. If cooking involves lighting a flame then we could consider preparing our food the day before. Salad always keeps well, or sandwiches. My wife has become an expert at preparing meals for Sabbath the day before. Some people feel it is quite acceptable to use a micro-wave to heat up pre-cooked food. Friday is called the *preparation day* to the Jewish people because they prepare for the coming Sabbath during that time. What about buying or selling? Again, this might affect the jobs we choose. Some businesses, for example, are busiest on Saturday; we may have to make a choice of staying open or closing on this day, a choice that I myself had to make. Yahweh will bless the sacrifice we make as He has done with me, in the opening of my shop on Sunday instead. Not ‘buying or selling’ would also affect the Saturday shopping tradition of so many in western societies. Again, shops in many countries of the world are now open on Sundays so the problem is solved.

Up to now I have been talking of basic and relatively plain things as they are seen in Scripture. Yet does abstention from work just mean abstinence from our weekly work, or other types of work as well? Does buying on a Sabbath involve all types of buying or just some types of buying? These, and others, are valid questions that have arisen throughout the generations. In the Old Covenant, the priests would make these decisions for Israel to follow. During the first century the rabbis held and practised this authority among the Jewish community. Since the first century, Yahweh has set a ministry in the church whose task it is to perfect the saints. Ministers can guide untrained people in what is, and, what is not permissible on the Sabbath – if asked. But this is not the best or only way of ascertaining what is and what is not permissible on the Sabbath day. A relationship with Yahshua and the Holy Spirit will enable us to gain answers for ourselves.

Mistakes may be made during one’s early experiences with the Sabbath and it is easy to slip into a legalistic attitude but the Holy Spirit has promised to lead us into all truth. Sabbath keeping is much more than going to a Christian fellowship on Saturday; it is a way of life, according to the guidelines of the Bible and **great** blessing can be found in it.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 12:8

<sup>2</sup> Mark 2:27

<sup>3</sup> Isa. 58:13

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 12:11

<sup>5</sup> See *Yahshua and Sabbath & Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath*

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### Quest for Truth: The Sabbath Day

## ***Personal Testimony***

Discovering the relevance of the Sabbath was a dynamic new revelation for our family. To realise that it all came through a New Covenant relationship with Yahshua Messiah our King was a revolutionary thought to us. As we welcomed this revelation to be a part of our lives, the Holy Spirit led us carefully and patiently to the priceless teachings associated with this day in the Bible. We have found the Sabbath to be *“a delight, the holy of [Yahweh], honourable.”*<sup>1</sup>

Special fellowship is spent with each other in prayer, song, Scripture reading, and family recreation, allowing the Sabbath to give us rest physically, but also to grant us an insight into those precious aspects of eternity, our future hope.

After a busy week, this day gives us the opportunity to strengthen our bodies for the coming week's work. There is a longing for the Sabbath all the days of the week, which foreshadows the longing of the eternal Sabbath all the days of our life.

Our church also finds this a good day to meet and hear from the Word of Yahweh in a similar way to the early believers. We all look forward to the Sabbath and the blessing that it brings not only into our own home but also in the body of Messiah throughout the world.

Whether we choose to acknowledge this day or not there is not a place on earth which is not visited by it. The Sabbath spreads herself like a magnificent robe across creation with her shelter of calmness and spiritual peace, a foretaste of the world to come possessed by holiness and filled with the presence of our heavenly King.

Each week, beginning on Friday evening, a foretaste of paradise begins, a fountain of peace overflows, and the savour of eternity is swallowed, as mankind surrenders to the blessings of the Sabbath day.

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<sup>1</sup> Isa. 59:13 <sup>A.V.</sup>