

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS SHABBAT?

Shabbat, the Sabbath, is the first of the “Feasts of the Lord”, as described in the 23rd chapter of the book of Leviticus (Vayikrah).” In Hebrew, the word used is a mo’ed מועד (or moadim מועדים in the plural form). This is the word that God uses to describe the appointed times when we are to hold special meetings. They are not so much ‘feasts’ or ‘festivals’ (although they may include these); but are more of a divinely appointed time to meet and celebrate or remember important aspects of our walk with God – past, present, and future. In the beginning (Genesis/B’reisheet), God institutes Shabbat, a Sabbath day of rest for all of humanity. It stands as a memorial of God’s creation of the universe.

“Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

(Gen 2:1-3)

In essence, God placed a boundary on His role as Creator of the Universe. He modeled a truth for us and that is: after working and creating and manipulating our universe, causing things to happen in our world for six days straight, we need to say, by faith, ‘it is finished, complete and done’. Now I am just going to rest from all my labors and efforts. Often, we need to say this by faith, since nothing around us seems to have been brought to completion. Unlike God, we are limited beings and sometimes never seem to accomplish all we would like to in any designated week. But with all the piles of unfinished business, we can, in obedience to the model God showed us, say ‘dayeinu’ (It is enough) – I have worked enough now for a human being and I will now stop and rest. People are, by our very sin nature, boundary pushers if not outright boundary breakers. Like little children, we’re always trying to push the limits of grace. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

A Foundational Feast of the Lord

Shabbat is often not thought of as a feast of the Lord, but in actuality it is the foundational feast upon which all the others are built. What happens if we fail to build a solid foundation for our home? When the storms and floods come, that house will likely fall, not being able to withstand the additional strain. In the same way, when we do not build our lives upon the foundation of God’s cycle of time for humanity; when we instead operate according to our pace of time, then when extra pressure or stress comes upon us through trials and tribulations, we may not be able to stand. For this reason, God has given us Shabbat, a day of Sabbath rest.

All of our activity must come out of a place of rest and peace. This concept goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

God created the first man and woman on the sixth day and on the seventh day, He rested. Adam's first day on earth after his creation was a day of rest! Doesn't it seem logical that in all of his excitement, Adam would want to explore this wonderful garden, set some short term and long term goals written and then immediately get started on his ten point action plan? But no - being comes before doing. The commandment to rest on the seventh day is still one of the Ten Commandments, one that we disregard at our own peril. In Hebrew, the word for Sabbath is Shabbat שבת which is related to the word 'la'shevet' לשבת – to sit. Here is a beautiful gift from God – the right to just sit and do nothing and not feel guilty about it but rather to feel holy in all of our sitting! Wow! Great news for couch potatoes; but let's not forget the other six days we are supposed to be working. ☺

Many people these days are suffering from fatigue, stress and chronic, widespread pain in their bodies as well as an emptiness of soul and despair of spirit. I have also experienced these afflictions. I kept hearing Yeshua say, *“Come to me, you (insert your own name) who are weary, worn out, and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest.”* And I would answer, *“Well, I'd love to, Lord, but you see, I have these little kids and a husband and a ministry and have so very much to do! So as soon as I get through this endless to do list, I will rest, O.K.?”* Again and again, in a still, quiet voice, the Holy Spirit spoke to me, **“In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence/trust shall be your strength (might or courage).”** (Isa. 30:15) But just like the Israelites refused *“No, for we will flee on horses”*, I also resisted God's gracious offer, **“Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you”**

The Lord knows how to wait so much better than we do. I wonder how many precious, weary, worn out saints are riding fast horses while the Lord is patiently waiting for them to slow down