



"Whoever touches you, touches the apple of His eye" (Zech 2:8)

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

By Susan Nikirk



PART SEVEN

THE SABBATH



It is my prayer that through this article the body of Messiah will come into a deeper revelation of the weekly Sabbath that God created, and will delight in this day. God Himself was the very first person to observe and set apart as holy the Sabbath. According to Genesis 2:2 *"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."* "The words: "On the seventh day God ended His work," seems to be a puzzle. Is it not said: "He rested on the seventh day?" "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth" (Ex. 20:11)? We should surely expect the Bible to tell us that on the sixth day God finished His work. Obviously, the ancient rabbis concluded, there was an act of creation on the seventh day. Just as heaven and earth were created in six days, *menuha* was created on the Sabbath. What was created on the seventh day? *Tranquility, serenity, peace and repose.*" (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 22-23) In the Hebrew Lexicon the root meaning of *menuha* is "to rest, to sit down." Although the actual word Sabbath is not used in this scripture, we see here the origin of the Sabbath.

"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. 2:3) The word sanctified in Hebrew is *qadosh*, which means "holy, be consecrated, dedicated." When we sanctify or make something holy, it is set aside for the purpose of God's work. There are three things mentioned in the Bible that are set aside as holy (*qadosh*), which are: people (i.e. priests), places (i.e. Mt. Zion), and times (i.e. Feasts). After God had created and blessed man and woman, the next thing that He blessed and declared holy, set

apart unto Himself was the Sabbath. The Sabbath was the first commandment, which man and woman observed immediately after their creation, and the first full day that they spent with God. God's plan of redemption is seen in Genesis 2:2-3, which points to the ultimate Sabbath rest that we will experience when Messiah Yeshua returns to rule and reign on the earth bringing this *menuha* with Him. Today we must labor to enter into His rest, (Heb. 4:10-11) which can only be achieved as we continuously meditate on the words of Yeshua, "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" (Jn. 14:27)

One of the most famous scripture passages, are the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. The fourth commandment "*But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.*" (Ex. 20:10-11) In the Ten Commandments the term hallowed (holy) is applied to one word only, the Sabbath. This commandment is restated again in Deut. 5:12-15, where there it says that we are to "*remember*" the Sabbath because of God's deliverance by His "*mighty hand and outstretched arm*" from Egypt, where there was work for seven days and no Sabbath. How many believers in Messiah observe the Sabbath each week, and remember their deliverance from the bondage and slavery of sin into eternal salvation?



In Exodus 31:12-17, God commands the children of Israel to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. The Hebrew word perpetual is "olam", and means "time out of mind or eternity". God states that this covenant is a sign between Him and the Israelites forever. A covenant is an agreement between two people, in this instance between God and the children of Israel. Today, this covenant still stands, and the local congregation is the instrument with which you work that out, but the agreement is with God. It is a covenant. God did not make a Sabbath for Jews, and a Sabbath for Christians. The Bible is the same yesterday, today, and forever, it has never changed, and never will. God did not instruct His Son, Yeshua to change the date of His weekly Sabbath. We can worship, celebrate the resurrection, and have services everyday of the week, but God, himself, declares "*the seventh day is the Sabbath*" (Ex. 20:10) We all know that the first day of the week is Sunday, and by adding six days to the first day of the week, Saturday is the Sabbath. One reason the Jewish people have a hard time with Christianity is because when the Church changed Saturday to Sunday, the Jewish people said, It can't be the same God the Church is worshipping since God gave us the Sabbath as a perpetual covenant sign.

The only day that has its own name in the Bible is the Sabbath (Shabbat in Hebrew); it is unlike all the other days. The Sabbath was so central to the life of God's people that the days of the week, before they were known by their planetary names, were originally numbered in relation to the Sabbath. The days of the week existed only because of the Sabbath. This is shown in the fact that in Hebrew the days of the week do not have independent names, but rather are numbered in their relation to the Sabbath, for instance Sunday is "first day to the Sabbath", Monday is "the second..." and so on.

As stated in my previous article "[Jew and Gentile – One New Man](#)," I explained how division came and separated the Church from its Hebraic Roots. One of these main divisions was the changing of the Saturday Sabbath to Sunday. This started in the early part of the second century and originated in Rome. It was not for biblical reasons that the Sabbath was changed, but for the Gentile Church to avoid any Jewish connection, and avoid persecution of them by an anti-Jewish Roman government. In 321 A.D. the emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire, and officially changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, in order to further distance the Church from Judaism.

Many scriptures in the New Testament have been misunderstood, because they have not been interpreted in their original cultural context. That context is first century Judaism. Yeshua faithfully kept the Sabbath on its original day, Saturday. *"So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read."* (Luke 4:16) Yeshua expected His followers to also keep the Sabbath, *"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath"* (Mk. 2:27) *"And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath"*. (Matt. 24:20) What Yeshua was against was the rabbinical rules that were added to the Sabbath, thereby making the Sabbath a burden for the people, and changing its original intent. As stated in Matthew 5:17, Jesus came to fulfill the law (Torah) and the prophets. The true meaning of this word "fulfill" is "to perform perfect obedience to the law of God in his own person and to enforce and explain it fully". If Yeshua had violated Torah, He would have been accused and found guilty of it, when He was tried before the Sanhedrin, but He was not (Mk. 14:55-64). He broke only rabbinical rulings, not Torah.



The apostle Paul has also been misunderstood in many of his writings. Paul was a Torah observant Jew. Many scriptures in the New Testament show us that Paul went to the synagogues and preached on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14-15, 42-44, Act. 16:13, 17:1-3, 18:1-4). Paul did not change the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Without an understanding of several scriptures in their Jewish context, the Church will interpret that they met on Sunday. Here is one example, Acts 20:7 *"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."* The way Jews have been observing the Sabbath for centuries, including today, starts on Friday evening at sundown with the lighting of candles, prayer, and a meal. Remember, God's day begins at sundown. The Sabbath ends with a special service called Havdalah, which means "separation, division". It distinguishes between the holy and the secular, between the holy Sabbath (seventh day) from the secular work week (six days). This service begins at sundown Saturday night, which in Hebrew is called, "Motza'ei-Shabbat", and includes prayer followed by a meal. In the above scripture, Paul and the believers had come together for their regular Sabbath meeting. This is when the disciples came together to break bread at the close of the Sabbath. Since they were already meeting, and Paul was leaving the next day, (Sunday) he kept talking until midnight and stayed until daybreak on Sunday when he departed to the next stop on his journey, Assos. They could not have had a meeting on Sunday because that was a workday for the Jews.

The Church has so distanced itself from the Hebraic roots, that the original intention of the Sabbath to enter God's rest (menuha), in order to bring blessings and holiness, is not understood. The issue whether the Sabbath is Saturday or Sunday is a distraction from God's original intention, and is a

diversion of Satan to continue to keep division between the Christian and the Jew. The Sabbath is not a Jewish Feast day. In a prior article written on "[The Appointed Times \(Moadim\)](#)," we read that God created specific appointed times, (Gen. 1:14, Lev. 23) also known as Festivals or Sabbaths for mankind to meet with Him. Leviticus 23:2-3 states that the seventh day Sabbath is an appointed time (moadim) of the Lord, His Feast, in which we are to have a holy convocation each week. Hebrews 10:25 says "*Forsake not the assembling of ourselves together...*" yet many believers forsake this. Today, this set time known as the Sabbath is not regarded as holy, but as a bondage of man having to go to church or synagogue. The Sabbath has become a religious observance. It should be a time that we look forward to all week, a time of sitting down at God's feet and allowing the Spirit of God to do a work in our hearts. When we come together it is not a time to judge the service or the minister, or to look at our watches for service to end, or to have our minds on other things. This is a choice that we all have, just as Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42; where Mary chose to sit at Yeshua's feet and hear the word, and Martha chose to just be busy. 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 the Lord's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.*"

The prophet Isaiah spoke of a time when Gentiles would embrace the God of the Jews "*...the sons of the stranger...that keep the Sabbath from polluting it, and take hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer...*" (Is. 56:6-7) Today throughout the world Gentile believers who have joined themselves to the Jewish people as fellow citizens of the commonwealth of Israel, are returning to the biblical Hebraic roots of the Sabbath. This is part of the restoration of all things that is to accompany the return of the Messiah (Act. 3:20-21). Throughout history the Sabbath has been central in Jewish life. Families were drawn together on the Sabbath for a twenty-four hour period. Parents and children dined together, prayed together, studied together, sang together, and went to synagogue together. They were a family. The body of Messiah needs to restore the Sabbath as central in family life. The Sabbath is a taste of the world to come. May we delight in the Sabbath and desire to keep it not out of compulsion, but to please God.

