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The Sabbath and National Survival
17: 19-27

The Sabbath and national survival survival DIG: Why doesn't Jeremiah make this announcement at the gates of the Temple? Where does the Sabbath rank in the Torah (Exodus 20:3-8)? Why is it important (Exodus 31:12-17)? Why is "work" forbidden (Numbers 15:32-36; Nehemiah 13:15)? Why is God now demanding obedience to the Torah? How did YHVH intend to act toward Y'hudah if she disobeyed as her ancestors had done?

REFLECT: Do you need to put more worship, more leisure or more spiritual growth into your life right now? What can you do this week? Since obedience leads to life, what is your greatest area of disobedience right now? What needs to change? Are Gentile Christians obligated to keep the Sabbath today?

606 BC during the eleven-year reign of Jehoiakim

God is always ready to forgive a repentant sinner (26:2-3). And it was the prophet's duty to indicate the remedy for the current evils of the people. It was therefore natural that Yirmeyahu should stress the importance of Shabbat, a basic institution of Judaism. Making the Sabbath holy, with its intensive spiritual influence, would tend to wean the people from other abuses and effect a reformation.

This is what ADONAI said to me: **Go and stand at the Gate of the People, through which the kings of Judah go in and out; stand also at all the other gates of Jerusalem** so everyone, high and low, will know **God's** message**. This gate would be the most frequently entered, so Jeremiah was to proclaim his message there first and then repeat it at all the other gates. Say to them, "Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah and all people of Judah and everyone living in Yerushalayim who come through these gates" (17:19-20).**

Admonition for Sabbath Observance: Obedience leads to life. If **the people** guard **the Day**, then **the Land** will be blessed; if **they** violate it, then **Tziyon** will be destroyed **This is what YHVH** says: **If you value your lives, don't carry anything on Shabbat or bring it in through these gates of Yerushalayim. Don't carry anything out of your houses on Shabbat and don't do any work (Exodus 20:8-11; Numbers 15:32-36; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). The prophet** was saying, "The Torah is still in effect!" **Instead** being disobedient**, 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 (17:21-23 CJB).** Observance of **Shabbat** gets our eyes off of ourselves and onto **God.** It makes us more reliant on **Him** and less reliant upon ourselves. Self-reliance was, of course, **Judah's** predominant temptation.

So **Jeremiah** then told his generation; **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 (17:24 CJB), then there will be blessings (Nehemiah 13:15-22):**

1. The continuous existence of David's throne. Kings who sit on David's throne will come through the gates of this City with their officials. Harking back to **Second Samuel 7, Jeremiah** both here and in other passages **(23:5-6, 30:9, 33:15)** affirms the ancient belief that **David's throne** would persist. If **it** was temporarily suspended **it** would be restored, even though some of the kings were unworthy of that honor **(22:30)**.

2. The rulers and common people will continually use the gates of Jerusalem. They and their officials will come riding in chariots and on horses (signs of prosperity)**, accompanied by the men of Judah and those**

living in Jerusalem.

3. Jerusalem will be inhabited forever. And this City will be inhabited forever (17:25). Likewise, **the Holy City** was the place where **ADONAI** had chosen to place **His** royal throne, and even if it were destroyed it **will be** restored and **inhabited forever (Zechariah 2:2-12, 8:3 and 15, 14:11)**. The security of the state would be guaranteed to **the people** if they kept the covenant.

4. The Temple will be the center of worship. People will come from the towns of Y'hudah and the villages around Yerushalayim, from the territory of Benjamin in the north, **and the western foothills, from** the mountainous area between Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea on **the** eastern **hill country and from the Negev** in the south**. They** will **bring burnt offerings** (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Fe – The Burnt Offering**), **and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense** (see the commentary on **Exodus Ff – The Grain Offering**), **and bringing peace offerings** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fg – The Peace Offering**) **to the house of the LORD (17:26).** These three elements – **the throne of David**, **the Temple**, and **the city of Jerusalem** – comprised the basic aspects of the national and religious life of **the people** and the covenant. Loyalty to **the LORD** of the covenant and obedience to the covenant demands were fundamental to the enjoyment of the blessings of the covenant.[170]

The other side of the picture is now given. Disobedience and breach of the covenant could only lead to the operation of **the curses** of the covenant. **But if you do not obey Me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying a load as you come through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then there will be cursings: I will kindle an unquenchable fire,** the symbol of destruction, **in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortress (17:27).** The key aspect will be the destruction of **Zion**.

Sabbath keeping and legalism: It is remarkable that the future of the nation hangs on keeping of **Shabbat** for **the Israelites**, particularly given all the emphasis on idolatry (and other sins) in the prior chapters. How can one sin result in such a disastrous future? This perspective has led to the charge of legalism, or the dependence of moral law rather than on personal faith. Yet the large context of **Jeremiah** suggests that **Sabbath**-keeping has here taken on a symbolic value; it is a sign of whether the relationship with **God** is in good order. **Sabbath**-breaking is seen here, not as an isolated matter, but as one more indication of **the people's stubbornness (17:23)**. Keeping **Shabbat** would then be an indicator that

Y'hudah was no longer in rebellion and resisting the will of **God** for **her** life.[171]

Should Christians keep the Sabbath day? Obviously messianic believers keep **Shabbat** because they attend worship services on Saturday anyway. But what about Gentile Christians who are used to going to church on Sundays, should they keep **the Sabbath**?

The almost universal observance of a seven-day "week" is one of those habits so ingrained in man that most of us don't stop to realize how remarkable it is. The month and the year have an obvious basis, in astronomy, but this is not true of the week. The seven-day week was not simply adopted in the Western world because of the Bible, as is obvious from the fact that the days of the week all have pagan names.

Although not all nations have observed a seven-day week, the practice existed long before the Jewish nation was formed and the Ten Commandments were given. The only real satisfactory explanation for this very ancient and almost worldwide custom is found in **Genesis 2:1-3, God Himself** established **the Sabbath** as a rest day commemorating creation! **Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing: so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done.**

So **God** ordained **in the beginning** that one day out of seven should be observed as a day of rest and worship. When **God** established **Isra'el** as the covenant nation, and gave the Ten Commandments, the fourth was: **Remember** (see the commentary on **Exodus Dn – Remember the Sabbath by Keeping It Holy**). As a result, from the very beginning the seventh day was set aside by **God** as a day of commemorating the completed creation, and of fellowship with its **Creator**. If mankind needed such a day in the Garden of Eden, we certainly need it much more today in our fallen condition. As **Jesus** said: **The Sabbath was made for mankind, not mankind for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).**

Although **the Sabbath** is a day of rest, it is not intended to be a day of lethargy, but rather of worship and study of the Scriptures. A time of such spiritual refreshment is really the most satisfying and fruitful way to rest from one's daily labor. Believers are no different today in this respect. In fact, our nature is such that we need a day of rest. It was made for us. We must spend at least one day in seven

in rest from our work and in spiritual renewal, or we will inevitably break down spiritually and physically, sooner or later.[172]

The Church has misunderstood **Shabbat** in two ways: First, some believe that Sunday is **the** new **Sabbath**. Sunday is never called **the Sabbath** anywhere in the Bible. **The Sabbath** was, and always will be, from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Gentile believers who go to church are no longer obligated to keep **Shabbat** under **the framework of the Torah as upheld by the Messiah (First Corinthians 9:21 CJB).** The day of **the Sabbath** has never changed. In addition, Sunday is never called "the Lord's Day," but **the first day of the week (Mattityahu 28:1; Mark 16:2** and **9; Luke 24:1; Yochanan 20:1** and **19; Acts 20:7; First Corinthians 16:2)**, both before and after the cross.

The second problem is applying rules and regulations to Sunday. For some churches, Sunday, not any other day, is an obligated day of rest and worship. Yes, we are supposed to meet together on a regular basis: **Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:25)**, but either day may be used as a special day of rest/worship to God. Paul wrote to the church at Rome: **One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord (Romans 14:5-6a;** also see **Colossians 2:16-17** and **Galatians 4:8-10).**

But for **the Jews** of **Jeremiah's** day, keeping **the Sabbath** was the means of national survival. Sadly, **they** were disobedient and, as a result, would go into exile.