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Shabbat
23: 1-4

Shabbat DIG: How is Shabbat like a date with God? How does the biblical calendar remind us of the agricultural year, particularly in the celebration of the harvest? How does Shabbat speak about creation and redemption? What is the link between Genesis 2:1-3 and Hebrews Chapter 4:10? How does Shabbat give us a future taste of the future world to come?

REFLECT: Do you have a Messianic congregation near you? Do you know how to access a Messianic congregation on the internet? As a Gentile, grafted into the Olive tree (Isra'el), do you choose to observe Shabbat? Why? Why not? Is there anything wrong with attending a Messianic congregation of Shabbat on Saturday and then going to church on Sunday?

Even though Gentiles are not bound to observe the sacred times (Colossians 2:16; Romans 14; Galatians 4:8-17), their freedom in Messiah allows them to do so if they choose to.

The biblical calendar (23:1-2): God said to Moshe, "Speak to the Israelites and say to **them, 'These are My appointed festivals, the appointed festivals of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred festivals' (23:1-2)."** The religious calendar coincided with the agricultural year, particularly in the celebration of the harvest. The feasts of **Pesach (Passover)** and **Hag ha'Matzah (Unleavened Bread)** were celebrated at the time of the barley harvest in the late spring, while **Shavu'ot (Weeks)** was celebrated fifty days later in late spring/early summer during the time of the wheat harvest The fall **festivals** of **Rosh ha'Shanah (Trumpets)**, **Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)**, and **Sukkot (Booths)** during the seventh month (September/October) were celebrated in conjunction with the harvest of grapes, figs, and olives.[418]



Shabbat (23:3-4): The first of **the festivals** (*mo'adim,* meaning *a time and place to meet*) listed in **Chapter 23** of **Leviticus** is **Shabbat**. The first listed is also the most important. It is a day of cessation from all regular work. It is like a date with **God**. Our relationship with **the Lord** is like a bride and groom, and is reflected in **Shabbat** and these **feasts**. The pattern for this day was set by **the Holy One** when **He** created everything (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see link click Aq – By the Seventh Day God Had Finished His Work**). We are told that when **ADONAI** completed all the work which **He** intended to do in the creation: **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 2:3).** Thus, the pattern for **rest** and completion on **the seventh day** was set from the very beginning of creation.

So, **Shabbat** is a verb, an action word – **it** is something that we do. What action is this verb related to? **Rest**! **Rest** is an action? It seems strange in our busy society that the concept of stopping and resting is an action. But if you have ever tried to fully participate in **Shabbat**, I'm sure you will soon realize that it is an action (**rest**) that takes much practice to be completely lived out. Our minds are simply not trained to stop and not be concerned with life, business, finances, etc. Yet, **His** provision is so complete. We can fully **rest** in **His** completed work and no longer toil in life to earn **His** love – it is given to us abundantly and freely. There is something about doing nothing (to further our own desires) that enables **the Ruach** of our **Father** to minister to us deeply and thoroughly on that **day**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being so wonderful! **You** are such an Awesome **Father** to Praise! We owe so very much to **You**: **Your** gift of **eternal life (Romans 5:17)**, **Your** great grace and mercy **(Ephesians 2:8-9)**, **Messiah's** willingness to take our shame and pain on the cross **(Hebrews 12:2), Your** steadfast love forgiving me for my sins and placing them **as far as the East is from the West (Psalms 103:10-11). Through Yeshua then, let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips giving thanks to His name (Hebrews 13:15).** It is a joy to praise **You** always – when I fall asleep, when I wake in the morning and even in the middle of the night if I wake up. Praising **You** is such a comfort for it puts the focus of life, not on the problems and trials of life; but on **You**, our Almighty, Loving and Holy, Heavenly **Father**. In the name of **Yeshua** and by the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

The Torah enjoins **Isra'el** to do as **YHVH** did and abstain from all **their** creative work. The Torah also stresses the importance of **Shabbat** in other ways. First, there are an abundance of passages – at least forgotten different ones – that teach about **the Shabbat**. Second, there is at least one **Shabbat** included in each mo'adim of **Chapter 23**. Third, by establishing a **Shabbat** year (see **El – The Sabbath Year**) and a **Shabbat** year after seven-sevens of years (see **Em – The Year of Jubilee**), we can understand that there must be something very awe inspiring about our celebration or acknowledgment of this **seventh-day rest**.[419]

There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of Sabbath rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD. These are ADONAI's appointed times (see **Dw – God's Appointed Times**)**, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times (23:3-4 NIV).** The seventh-day **Shabbat** stands at the front of this list of **festivals**. This is an indication of its importance. Moreover, to further emphasize the teaching of **Shabbat-rest**, each of these special days contains at least one **Shabbat**, or **day** of **rest**. The first and last days of **Hag ha'Matzvot** (including **Pesach and Resheet**) and **Sukkot** both start and finish with a **Shabbat**. And **Shavu'ot**, **Rosh Ha'Shanah**, and **Yom Kippur** are each a **Shabbat** in themselves. We get the impression that **Shabbat** may be, indeed, the most important of **the festivals**.

Shabbat in this context is referred to as *shabbat shabbaton*, **the Shabbat** of **Shabbats**, or *the most restful cessation.* Thus, according to traditional Jewish thinking – based upon the Torah statements regarding **Shabbat**, the weekly **Shabbat** reminds us of two things: **creation** and **redemption**. Accordingly, each

of the feasts teach us something about being a **creation** of **God** and about being a **redeemed** person. It seems, therefore, that **Shabbat** is intimately connected with the themes of each **festival**. A special day called **Shabbat** is there to further emphasize on a weekly basis the themes of **creation** and **redemption** of which each feast speaks. But just how does **Shabbat** speak about them?

First, Shabbat reminds us of creation, in that, it is entirely independent of the month and unrelated to the moon. Its date is not determined by any event in nature, such as a new moon, but by the act of **creation** itself. Thus, the essence of **the Shabbat** is completely detached from the world of space. By reminding us of the physical **creation** **Shabbat** reminds us that we were all created to be completely dependent upon **the Creator** for everything. Life was meant to be one of eternal **rest** in **Him** and **His** provision for all of our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs.

But sometime after **the creation**, the Fall occurred (see the commentary **Genesis Ay – The Fall of Man**). Mankind, in his **sinful** state, continually attempts to assert his desire for independence from his **Creator**. This has left all of us in a state of spiritual slavery where **sin** has so bound us that we cannot on our own break away from our desire to live life independent of our **Creator**.

However, because of **His** grace, love, and mercy toward **His creation**, **the Creator** set out to set us free from that spiritual bondage, whose ultimate end is **death**. **For the wages of your [sin nature] is death (6:23a).** This is called **redemption** – releasing us from the slavery of **sin**. The result is that when anyone accepts **God** and receives **His redemption** accomplished by the atoning sacrifice of **Messiah**, that person is made into a new **creation**. Moreover, the chains of **sin** are broken forever and **sinful** mankind is changed into a spiritual being whose innermost desire is to a life that is completely dependent upon **the Creator** (see the commentary on **Romans Bu – The New Freedom in Messiah**).

YHVH provided a wonderful gift to **His** people. Once a week, **He** has created a day serving as a reminder to believers that they are made to depend on **God**. Hence, we are to cease from our labors. Just as **Ha'Shem** ceased from making **His** physical **creation** because there was simply nothing else to be done, so we are to practice once a week to cease from striving and all daily laboring because there is nothing else which can possibly be done to us – we are complete in **Messiah**! **Therefore, if anyone is united with the Messiah, he is a new creation – the old has passed; look, what has come is fresh and new (Second Corinthians 5:17)!**

Second, Shabbat also reminds believers of redemption. When **Messiah** saved us from our **sins** and atoned for **them**, **ADONAI** also **redeemed** us from slavery to our **sin**. **He** made us free to live for **Him** and free to **rest** in **Messiah's** finished work. Thus, once a week, **God** provided a reminder of what it means to **rest** in **Him** and live as a **redeemed** person. Moreover, each of the other **festivals** also contain at least one day of **rest**. The picture here is that each of **the festivals** teach us something about what it means to **rest** in **Him** and walk as a **redeemed** person.

In these ways, **Shabbat** displays its preeminence among **the festivals**, and **the rest** on each of **the festivals** should be considered just as important as the weekly **Shabbat** and the **Shabbats** of the other **festivals** all picture some aspects of what it means to be a new **creation** and a **redeemed** person in **Messiah**.[420]

The Good News: There is a vital connection to the importance that **ADONAI** puts on **the Sabbath** and the revelation of **Messiah** in it. To see this clearly, we will examine **Hebrews Chapter 4**. In this amazing chapter, the writer makes a link between the establishment of a seventh day **Shabbat** by **YHVH** in **Genesis** and entering into the eternal spiritual **rest** we have through **faith** in **the Messiah**. The link is the concept or **rest**.

In **Genesis 2:1-3**, **God** did not stop all activities. **He**, of course, continued to sustain the universe which **He** had just finished creating. But **His rest** consisted of a cessation of all **His** creative work. The creation was finished and accomplished. There was simply nothing else necessary to do other than sustaining the work that **He** had just completed. Therefore, **YHVH rested** – not because **He** was physically tired – but simply because **He** was finished.

Hebrews Chapter 4 tells us that belief in **Yeshua** is exactly the same way. The six days of labor in **one's** life are the time before he believes in **Messiah**. It is a time where he seeks to earn **God's** approval. It is a time when he strives to do, to perform, to labor and struggle in order to attempt to gain approval of his **Creator**.

In contrast, when a person trusts in **the Messiah** for his salvation, he "**enters** into **a rest**," according to **Hebrews 4:3a**. This is the same kind of **rest** that **YHVH** entered into when **He** finished the creation as is stated in **Hebrews 4:4, "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works."** Why is believing in **Messiah** likened to entering **a Shabbat-rest**? Continuing our study in **Hebrews**, we find the key in **verse 4:10**, **"For the one who has entered His rest has Himself also**

rested from His works, as God did from His."

What, then, enables a person to be accepted by **God** as righteous? It is not our efforts. It is simply **resting** in what **Messiah** did for us! **Messiah** did all the work for us. **He** paid the penalty for our sin. **He** accomplished the atonement. **He** secured our justification. **He** completely changed us from **His enemy (James 4:4)**, to **His child (John 1:12). He** redeemed us from slavery. **He** reconciled us to **God**. **He** forgave us. **He** saved us! Even the very **faith** necessary for all of this to be true for us was **a gift** given to us from our loving heavenly **Father, "For you have been delivered by grace through faith, and even this is not your accomplishment but God's gift. You were not delivered by your own actions; therefore, no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).** What more was necessary to make us new creations (see the commentary on **Second Corinthians Bd – A New Creation**). NOTHING! Except to merely, by **faith**, enter into the wonderful eternal **Shabbat** that **ADONAI** has waiting for all who believe in **Messiah**.

In essence, therefore, if we understand the message of **Shabbat**, especially as it is explained in **Hebrews 4**, we see that the message of **Shabbat** is **the Good News**! That is why the Torah deems **Shabbat** as being so important. If we do not understand **the Shabbat**, then we are deficient in our understanding of salvation. Hence, once a week **God** provides us with a visible practical way to remember our **rest in Messiah** – by setting aside the seventh as **He** did. Moreover, each of the other **festivals** (mo'adim) have at least one **Shabbat** associated with them. This is as if **YHVH** were saying that whatever else these **appointed times** may teach, it all begins by entering into **God's** eternal **rest** through **faith** in the finished work of **Messiah**.

A taste of the future: Hebrews Chapter 4 also teaches us at least one more important concept about **the Shabbat**. It tells us that **the** present **Shabbat** is just a small test of the future eternal **Shabbat** we will enjoy because **Messiah** saved us by **His** grace (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**). This idea is hinted at in **Hebrews 4:9**, where we read: **There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.** The writer of **Hebrew**s had already discussed the necessity of entering into **God's** spiritual **rest** for our daily lives **(Ps 95)**. In this verse, however, the writer of **Hebrews** seems to hint of a future **rest**. Both the TaNaKh and **in rabbinical literature**, **the Sabbath** is viewed as a type of the world to come.

Therefore, when we observe **Shabbat** in a physical way every week we not only act out **the rest** we presently have from being in **Messiah** but we also live out a little bit of what it will be like in the world to come when we will forever experience the perfect blessings of the **rest Messiah** gave to us through **His** redemption.[421]