

Sabbath Isn't Just for Rest; It Is to Remember

Have you ever imagined yourself standing at Mount Sinai among the Israelites and suddenly you hear a voice booming from within the cloud? This voice, although it was heard by all Israel at one time, also seemed as if it was speaking directly into the heart of each individual standing around the mountain. What a powerful moment that must have been! As I write these words today, it is my hope that you will not just read the words I am writing, but that you will hear the voice of the one who spoke them so long ago on that mountain.

One of the things that the people heard G-D's voice say was, "Remember Yom Shabbat, to keep it holy." Before you say to yourself, "Here comes another legalistic teaching on how I should be observing the Sabbath," then go read something else, please read a little further because I believe you will be pleasantly surprised.

Ever since I was a small child and first heard the words "Remember the Sabbath day," I wondered why this commandment was worded so differently than the other commandments that were spoken that day. The other commandments were written: "Don't do this, don't do that," or "You shall not do this, you shall not do that." But the fourth commandment started with the word "remember."

This didn't seem to make sense to me. After all, we might forget a birthday or anniversary that comes once a week. But how do you forget one of the days of the week? I mean, even on the Greco-Roman calendar used the world over, Saturday is still shown as the seventh day. How would Israel forget a day of the week?

The use of the word "remember," which on the surface was a

reminder for us to remember the seventh day of the week (which we, as believers, should do), carried with it a much more meaningful message to the children of Israel and, by extension, to us today. Remember, the Sabbath day is much more than taking a day off. It is about remembering.

You may ask, "What is it that we are supposed to remember?" Well, what if I told you that what we are to remember on the Sabbath day is something that G-D forgot? For me to explain what I mean, we need to look at the book of Exodus. Here, we find the children of Israel gathered around the mountain where they hear the words of Torah. After they hear the words, Moses is invited by G-D to go up the mountain and receive the tablets of testimony. The last thing that happens before Moses comes down from the mountain is found in Exodus 31:12-13 (TLV):

"Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak now to Bnei-Yisrael saying, "Surely you must keep My Shabbatot, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, so you may know that I am Adonai who sanctifies you."'"

The commandment to keep the Sabbath was spoken by G-D to Moses just before Moses was given the tablets of stone. Right after hearing the closing words that we read in Chapter 31, we turn the page and begin to read about the golden calf in Chapter 32, which all would agree was an extremely low point in the history of Israel. Because Moses didn't return from the mountain when they expected him to, the people made an idol and fell into idolatry at the foot of the mountain.

We can all agree that this was a horrible sin, and if we were comparing sins (which we should not do), none of us has made a golden calf while we could visibly see the very presence of G-D. As we continue to read, we find Moses pleading for G-D to forgive Israel in Exodus 33 and the giving of the second tablets of stone in Exodus 34. It is at this point in the narrative that people talk about G-D's mercy and forgiveness

and His willingness to renew His covenant with Israel, which is all true. However, if you stop reading the narrative of the golden calf at the end of Exodus 34, you will miss the fullness of the message of G-D's forgiveness, which we find in Exodus 35.

Chapter 34 ends with a renewed covenant between G-D and His people Israel, and it is absolutely a testimony to G-D's grace and mercy that He renewed or reestablished His covenant with Israel in Exodus 34. However, G-D didn't then, nor does He today, simply renew His covenant with us when we repent from our sinful actions. G-D doesn't simply look at us and just say, "Let's start over." There is more to it than that.

It is only when we continue reading into Exodus 35 that we can understand what really took place between G-D and Israel.

"Then Moses assembled all the congregation of Bnei-Yisrael and said to them, 'These are the words which Adonai has commanded you to do. Work is to be done for six days, but the seventh day is a holy day for you, a Shabbat of complete rest to Adonai'" (Ex. 35:1-2a).

Did you catch it? Exodus 35 begins where Exodus 31 ended. Basically, G-D brought Israel back to the place they were before Exodus 32, before the golden calf had ever been made and before they fell into idolatry. Not only did G-D re-enter the covenant with Israel, He didn't just forgive their sin; He restored them as if they had never sinned.

I believe that this is why we are to remember the Sabbath day. We are not commanded only to keep the Sabbath day. Keeping involves separating the day from the other six days. Keeping involves abstaining from ordinary work. Keeping involves having a holy convocation or gathering. We are not commanded to *just keep* the Sabbath day; we are to *remember* it. I believe what we are supposed to remember is that not only did G-D rest on the Sabbath after creation, but we are to remember that

when He forgave Israel for making the golden calf, He forgave them so completely that He restored them to a pre-sin condition.

When we remember the Sabbath today as believers in Yeshua, we do it for the same reason. When G-D renews His covenant with us and forgives us, He forgives us so completely that we stand before Him in pre-sin condition. Remember what it says in Exodus 31:13:

“Speak now to Bnei-Yisrael saying, ‘Surely you must keep My Shabbatot, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, so you may know that I am Adonai who sanctifies you.’”

The Sabbath is a sign that G-D has sanctified us. Sabbath is a reminder of G-D’s complete forgiveness, which includes His forgetting completely. {eo}

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