

Sabbath in the Bible

The last thing that G-d created in the story of creation was the Sabbath, the day of rest. The Sabbath is actually the seventh day of the week; it marks the ending of one week and the beginning of a new one. This is by no means the most important day of the week. The verses tell us that on the seventh day, G-d stopped His creation. This was a day after the male and female were created, as written in Genesis 2:1–3:

“And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day G-d finished His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work, which He had done. And G-d blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because in it He rested from all His work, which G-d had done in creation.”

Seemingly, there is no problem here. We have six days of work and one day of rest. However, if we look at Genesis 2:2, we learn that G-d finished His work on this day and not on the sixth day. This verse arose from a difficulty that caused changes in other versions of The Bible, for example, in The Septuagint (LXX) it is written that G-d finished His work on the sixth day and not on the seventh. Another way to solve this problem is with the interpretation of the verb finished (wayechal in Hebrew). This verb could denote the past tense, meaning that G-d had already finished creating on the sixth day.

The Scriptures give us three main reasons for the creation of “Shabbat” (Sabbath), a term used in the old ages.

The first reason is the cosmological-religious one; Shabbat is the most sacred day in the week, this is the day that The Lord distinguished from the other days of the week, in order to help us, His creatures, to understand the difference between holiness and secularism. We are expected to rest like G-d did.

In this way we are indentifying with His actions, as written in Exodus 31:16-17:

“Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested.”

The second reason is the social-universal one: The Sabbath is the day that all people become equal in relation to one thing—rest. In the Ten Commandments in the book of Deuteronomy, we can see that all should be as one. Lets let the Bible share this idea with us (ibid 5:13):

“...but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord, thy God, in it thou shall not do any manner o work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that they man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou.”

The third reason is historical—this is a reminder of the exile from Egypt. In Egypt the people of Israel didn't know the taste of freedom. Therefore, they need to remember how they felt in order to prevent others from feeling like slaves.

In order to understand the uniqueness of the Sabbath, we need to remember one more important thing. This day is not for working, it's for our soul, for our spirit. For me, it is not important if it is the seventh day or the sixth; all G-d's creations deserve a day of rest. Unlike the Mesopotamian custom, called Shappattu (the fool moon on the 14th day of the month) that was only for the rich people and nobility, on the Sabbath, we all need and deserve our rest. This is not the day of bad luck, like it was between the two rivers (this is the meaning of the word Mesopotamia), this is a sacred day and a blessed on.

Don't forget to rest from week to week my friends!

Article obtained from eTeacherBiblical, used with permission.