

The Blessing of a Little Shabbat Shalom

One of my favorite memories of living in Israel was experiencing Shabbat. Fridays were hectic as everyone finished their shopping, cleaning and cooking in preparation for family gatherings and a day of rest.

The stores would close by 4:00 p.m. so that shoppers and workers could catch that last bus home. And just as the sun was setting—as the roads emptied of cars and buses and synagogues filled up for prayer—you could hear off in the distance the Shabbat whistle, alerting the whole city that Shabbat had begun.

Because Jerusalem's population includes such a high percentage of religious Jews, the entire city would shut down—so much so that in many neighborhoods, you could walk down the middle of the road on Shabbat because you knew there would be no cars driving by. I loved waking up on Saturday morning to silence—no cars, no horns, just the sounds of children playing and maybe neighbors gathering for a meal. I also loved greeting my friends and neighbors with “Shabbat Shalom”—wishing them a peaceful and restful Sabbath.

If you long for a little peace in your life too, a weekly time of rest and quiet might help bring that about.

What Does ‘Shabbat’ Mean?

The whole concept of a weekly rest goes back to creation when God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh.

Shabbat is the Hebrew word for “Sabbath,” which comes from the root word *sheva*, meaning “seven.” Shabbat is thus the “seventh day,” but it also means the “day of rest.” The Bible says that when God rested on the seventh day, He blessed it (made it

holy), so it's considered a holy day on the Jewish calendar each week.

Because God rested on the seventh day, He expected His people to do the same. Not only is honoring the Sabbath one of the Ten Commandments, but it became the sign of the Mosaic covenant. The Israelite people were the only people on earth who observed a day of rest every week. It made them different because they reflected the God to whom they belonged—the Creator, who rested on the seventh day.

Even though you and I may not be obligated to the Mosaic covenant, if a Sabbath rest is so important to God that He made it a sign of His covenant with His people, maybe there's something there that we need to learn and apply to our lives. Could it be that a pattern of regular rest and reflection could bring us all closer to Him and fill our lives with greater peace?

What Does 'Shalom' Mean?

The Hebrew word for "peace" is *shalom*, which means a peace that comes from a payment being made or a lack being fulfilled. In other words, it means being made whole. This makes sense—people who don't have peace are usually worried about something they are lacking or haven't done or are striving to obtain. Peace is the opposite of that.

We all lacked peace at one point because we owed a debt we could not pay—and the wages for our sin was death. But out of His grace and mercy, Jesus paid the price on the cross for our sins, making us whole through Him so we can live in peace. If He took care of that ultimate debt caused by our sin, He can take care of anything we bring to him.

Only He can fill that void in our hearts, make us whole and give us peace.

As your busy week comes to an end, ponder the blessing of

spending time with the Lord, resting in His presence and becoming more like Him. Take time to reflect on all He has done for you and learn to walk in that peace.

I wish for you Shabbat Shalom! {eoa}

For the original article, visit .

Dr. Susan Michael is USA director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem and host of the Out of Zion podcast. Subscribe to the Out of Zion podcast or text “zion” to 72572 to receive her Friday Shabbat Shalom devotionals and end your week with a little peace.

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