

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

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Shabbat

An Introduction to the Basics

Shemot (Exodus) 20:8

“Remember the Shabbat day, to keep it holy.”

This passage is from what is known as the Ten Commandments, or in Hebrew, the Ten Words. This is the fourth one. It is very important that we note the first word of this commandment as being “remember,” which comes from the Hebrew word זָכַר – “zakor”; “to remember.” YHWH gave this commandment in this fashion because it was already in practice, having its foundation from the beginning of creation.

B’reshit (Genesis) 2:2-3

2 And on the seventh day Elohim finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.

3 And Elohim blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which Elohim had created and made.

From this passage we learn that the seventh day of the week is not the same as Shabbat. Now before you go picking up stones to hurl at me, please consider carefully what this passage actually says. There are two things of note in this passage for us at present. First, that YHWH finished working on the seventh day: ***“on the seventh day Elohim finished His work.”*** So what work did He do on the seventh day? It is the same thing that He has commanded us to make on the seventh day.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 5:15

“And you shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and YHWH your Elohim brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm: therefore YHWH your Elohim commanded you to make the Shabbat day.”

Please note that in this passage YHWH through Moshe commands us to “make” the Shabbat day. The Hebrew word for “make” is עָשָׂה – “asah.” The simple truth here is this: Every single

person on this planet receives seven days a week. This means that every person receives the seventh day once a week. Does this mean that every person takes that seventh day and “makes” a Shabbat out of it? Of course not! Only those who are interested in hearing and obeying His Voice take the seventh day of the week and make it into a Shabbat. So how do we know that we are to do this on the seventh day of the week and not on some other day of the week?

Shemot (Exodus) 20:9-11

9 “Six days shall you labor, and do all your work;

10 but the seventh day is a Shabbat unto YHWH your Elohim; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your man-servant, nor your maid-servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates;

11 for in six days YHWH made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore YHWH blessed the Shabbat day, and hallowed it.”

YHWH has commanded us to work six days a week and rest on the seventh day of the week, making the seventh day of the week Shabbat just in the same fashion that YHWH “made” the seventh day His Shabbat.

The seventh day comes for everyone. Not everyone will choose to make the seventh day his Shabbat. If one has the desire to make the seventh day his Shabbat then there are some things that he needs to understand in regards to making the seventh day his Shabbat in the same fashion that YHWH Elohim the Creator made the seventh day His Shabbat.

Shemot (Exodus) 16:23

And he said unto them, “This is that which YHWH has spoken, ‘Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy Shabbat to YHWH; bake that which you will bake, and boil that which you will boil; and all that remains over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.’”

YHWH has commanded His people shema Yisrael, that in order to keep the Shabbat day holy and set-apart, one cannot do any cooking on this day. All cooking preparations must be done in advance of sunset on the sixth day.

In addition to the command for not cooking we are not to work on this day.

Shemot (Exodus) 35:2

Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Shabbat of solemn rest to YHWH; whosoever does any work therein shall be put to death.

YHWH is very serious about His Shabbat day being kept set-apart and holy, particularly by those who claim to be a part of His people Israel. To work upon this day carries with it the penalty of death. As we see in this next passage, a man in Israel was found working, gathering sticks upon this day. Please note that the elders did not know what to do with him, so this case was presented directly to YHWH from Moshe.

B'midbar (Numbers) 15:32-36

32 And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks upon the Shabbat day.

33 And they that found him gathering sticks brought him to Moshe and Aharon, and to all the congregation.

34 And they put him in custody, because it had not been declared what should be done to him.

35 And YHWH said to Moshe, "The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp."

36 And all the congregation brought him outside the camp, and stoned him to death with stones; as YHWH commanded Moshe.

We are not told the purpose of this man gathering sticks. Therefore, we can know with a great deal of certainty that this bit of information is not important and actually is irrelevant to the decision made or even for us to understand what we need to understand about it. YHWH does not want us to get sidetracked on minute details that do not have any bearing upon this incident. This man was working. Therefore, the verdict was that he was guilty and that the penalty for working upon the Shabbat is death. This sentence was immediately carried out by Israel, who stoned him to death outside the camp.

In an agrarian society planting and harvesting times are very important. There is only a small window of opportunity that these may be done. And if it is raining, then this window becomes even smaller. So it would be very tempting at times to work through Shabbat to get this very important task accomplished as one's livelihood may well depend upon getting these tasks done.

Shemot (Exodus) 34:21

Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.

It would be easy for man to reason away the Shabbat during planting and harvest times as something that his life actually depended upon getting done. But YHWH gave us a special commandment to deal with this very struggle. Without this commandment man could even reason by extrapolation that it would be okay to work on Shabbat if it was the only time that he could work in order to provide for his family. However, YHWH did give us this commandment to help us understand that we are not to work on Shabbat. What each person needs to understand is that it is not the planting and harvesting that one should be dependent upon. It is not one's efforts that provide for one's livelihood.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 8:3

"And He humbled you, and caused you to be hungry, and fed you with manna, which you did not know, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not

live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of YHWH does man live."

This is one of the most valuable lessons that anyone can learn. It is not the following of the letter of the Torah that brings one life, but rather it is the hearing and obeying of His Voice that brings life. This is no less true when it comes to making the seventh day a Shabbat. Making the seventh day a Shabbat is a matter of the heart, not a following of the letter of the Law (Torah).

Now there are several questions that we need to examine concerning the Shabbat as these questions have surfaced and are making their way around amongst the followers of Mas hiach Yeshua. One of those questions is dealing with whether we are commanded to gather together on the seventh day Shabbat. The following passage is often referenced by some as a means to show that we should not gather together on Shabbat.

Shemot (Exodus) 16:29

"See, for that YHWH has given you the Shabbat, therefore He gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

However, to take this verse and attempt to make it mean that we are not to gather together on Shabbat is to ignore the context of this passage. The context of the passage is the giving of manna for six days with no manna being available to be collected on the seventh day Shabbat, for that would be working.

So, when Moshe tells Israel that every man is to stay in his place, what he is telling them is that they are not to go to the fields and gather on the seventh day for they are to make this day Shabbat. This commandment has nothing to do with gathering together to worship. What it has to do with is working and its prohibition against working on the seventh day Shabbat.

As we will see in the following passage, YHWH actually commands us to gather together on the seventh day Shabbat to worship Him in a collective manner.

Vayyiqra [Leviticus] 23:3

"Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a Shabbat of solemn rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no manner of work; it is a Shabbat to YHWH in all your dwellings.

So what is a "holy convocation"? What does it mean to have "a Shabbat of solemn rest"? These are important questions that we need to answer so that our celebrations, and in particular our weekly seventh day Shabbat will be pleasing in His sight.

The first question deals with a "miqra qodesh" - מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ which is translated in the above passage as "holy convocation." "Miqra" means a sacred assembly and "qodesh" means to be set-apart. So a "miqra qodesh" means a very set-apart sacred assembly. So YHWH actually

gives us a commandment in this passage to gather together each week to worship and praise Him in a set-apart gathering.

So then, what does it mean to have a Shabbat of solemn rest?

The Hebrew word here is שַׁבְּתוֹן – “shabbaton.” This word is found thirteen times in eleven verses in the Torah Moshe; three of those in the book of Shemot (Exodus) and the rest of them in the book of Vayyiqra (Leviticus).

Several times this word is immediately preceded by the word שַׁבַּת – “Shabbat” as it is in the above passage. So the question before us is this: how do we properly understand the word “shabbaton”; and what is a “Shabbat shabbaton”?

As we can easily see, the word “shabbaton” comes from the word “Shabbat.” The word שַׁבַּת – “shabbat” means “to stop work, to curtail activity before completion, to rest.” שַׁבְּתוֹן – “Shabbaton” seems to be the compounding of שַׁבַּת and אָוֶן. Often when making compound words in Hebrew, letters are dropped. In this case the aleph is dropped, adding the וֹן – “on” which is pronounced with a long ‘o’ sound as in the English word “own.” This word, אָוֶן means “to acquire.” So what we have with the word שַׁבְּתוֹן would mean “to acquire a cessation of work or an acquired cessation of work.” With the coupling of these two words we would have an emphatic command not to work.

Let us examine the weekly Shabbat as a shabbaton to see what this means so we can make our seventh day a pleasing Shabbat to Him.

Shemot [Exodus] 16:23

And he said to them, “This is that which YHWH has spoken, ‘Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy Shabbat to YHWH; bake that which you will bake, and boil that which you will boil; and all that remains over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.’ ”

This passage is speaking of the weekly Shabbat on the seventh day. Notice that there is to be no cooking on this day. All the cooking is to be done before that day begins. This is a very important aspect of what makes a shabbaton.

Shemot [Exodus] 31:15

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Shabbat of solemn rest, holy to YHWH; whosoever does any work on the Shabbat day, he shall surely be put to death.

Working on the Shabbat shabbaton carries the death penalty! There are no exceptions. Please brethren, do not try to reason this away with something such as: I am under grace and YHWH knows my heart and He will understand. Stop! This is extremely serious. Your eternal life and well-being hangs in the balance here. Is this something with which you really want to gamble, particularly considering that YHWH has already told us that working on the Shabbat carries the

death penalty? What part of that don't you understand? So, are you going to obey His commandments or not? How long will you waver between two opinions?

Such is a shabbaton. When a day is a shabbaton, we are not to cook on this day, nor are we to work on this day!

Another question that often comes up in discussions concerning the Shabbat is the kindling of a fire and what that means exactly.

Shemot (Exodus) 35:3

"You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Shabbat day."

The discussion as to what this means is mostly centered on whether the above passage means a prohibition against any fire at all, or just a prohibition against a fire for working or cooking. Is there anything in this verse or this context that can help us to have an understanding that is in line with its meaning and its intent?

First, notice that in the subsequent verses it is dealing with the building of the Mishkan. This would show to us that the Shabbat includes a rest from building religious buildings as well as secular work. So in the building of the Mishkan, YHWH commanded them to rest and not do any work towards the completion of this most worthy task.

The NTC's Hebrew and English dictionary list the word "moshav" (which is translated in many English versions as "dwellings" or as "habitations" as in the above passage) but here most probably should be translated as a "cooperative settlement." So this commandment would be saying that the community fire used for work must be put out for the Shabbat rest.

What this commandment is not dealing with is heating our homes and being comfortable (warm). Would we be resting if we were cold? Of course not! If we are sitting in a cold dark house on Shabbat, what does this teach our children about the love of our heavenly Father? Nothing! YHWH does not expect us to be miserable on Shabbat. How would that be honoring to Him?

Let us also understand that fire and the potential for fire is not the same thing. A match has the potential for fire but is not fire itself. We must make this distinction, because if we do not, then we could become guilty of adding to His commandment and this would not be good for us. For example, is there fire in a light bulb when it has electricity flowing through it? No! This flowing of electricity has the potential to make a fire, but that electricity flowing through the element in a light bulb is not fire itself. Turning on a switch lighting a light bulb is not starting a fire. Furthermore, it has nothing to do with a community work fire at all and therefore is not prohibited by this commandment.

So, basically, all those activities that are work related in the community must stop for Shabbat. Of course, there is the Torah commandment that we are to take care of our animals even on

Shabbat as they are completely dependent upon their owners. But even this can be minimized ahead of time by doing as much of the work effort on sixth day in preparation for the coming Shabbat on seventh day.

Continuing to consider this question of not kindling a fire upon Shabbat, let us prayerfully consider the following passage of Scripture.

Matithyah [Matthew] 12:11-12

11 And He said to them, "What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the Shabbat day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?"

12 How much more then is a man of more value than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Shabbat day."

As important as the Shabbat is, and as carefully as we should guard the Shabbat to keep it a set-apart day, saving a life is the highest mitzvah. This mitzvah is so high, that Yeshua agrees that even saving the life of an animal is so great, that one should do what is necessary, even on the Shabbat. Then Yeshua asks the question: is not a man of much greater value than an animal? The question is somewhat rhetorical, and the answer is obvious from the context, that man is indeed more valuable than the Shabbat, for with His very next action Yeshua healed the man upon the Shabbat.

Now let us briefly consider what it means to save a life. From the context above we know that it is speaking of the physical life of animals and of mankind. However, can we not extend this to the spiritual life? Should we not extend this to the spiritual life of man? It would seem prudent that we do this. Therefore, would it not be the highest of all the mitzvot to help another human to come into the World to Come? To be sure! Can we not see then, that not causing our own children to stumble is a great mitzvah in and of itself?

Therefore, let us carefully walk before all men, but especially before our own families, that we gently and lovingly encourage them to have a part in the World to Come.

Now there is also the question of whether buying and selling is allowed or not allowed by YHWH our Elohim on Shabbat. Now it has been pointed out by some that there is not a direct commandment in the Torah Moshe prohibiting these activities. As a result there are those who tout the position that it is okay to buy and sell on the seventh day Shabbat. To buy or sell something would mean that at some point in this transaction a person is going to be carrying a burden either to or from his place of dwelling. This certainly violates the commandment not to work on Shabbat. But let us carefully and fearfully consider this question and see if there is an answer from Scripture.

As we are about to see from several passages of Scripture, since the Shabbat is a Shabbat shabbaton, a day of complete rest, then buying and selling upon this day violates this principle and concept of a complete rest.

Amos 8:5

saying, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Shabbat, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit;"

While this passage is generally dealing with deceit, it also makes reference to the fact that they did not buy or sell upon Shabbat, but had to wait for the Shabbat (and New Moon) to be over in order to be able to buy and sell.

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 58:13

"If because of the Shabbat you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day; and call the Shabbat a delight, and the holy of YHWH honorable; and shall honor it, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words:"

Making the seventh day Shabbat is not about seeking one's own pleasure. It is about seeking YHWH. If a person is buying and selling upon the seventh day, then he is not seeking the things of YHWH, but is seeking his own pleasure. Let us remind ourselves that YHWH commanded that even the work on the Mishkan was to cease upon the seventh day. So if YHWH specifically commands that work on His earthly dwelling place (Mishkan) must cease on the seventh day, then whatever work one would do must also cease upon this day, which most assuredly includes buying and selling. For the activity of buying and selling is work.

Do we not sell our time to an employer when we work? To be sure! So, if one goes to another to buy something from him, then he is also purchasing work time, therefore causing another to work upon this day. Since YHWH commanded us that we are not to work, and neither are our servants or even our animals to work upon this day, then causing another to work for us is just as wrong as our doing it ourselves. So, when one buys and sells upon the seventh day Shabbat he is causing another to be employed, thereby causing another to work for him in that instance, which is a violation of Shabbat.

Yirmeyah (Jeremiah) 17:21-22

***21 Thus says YHWH, "Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Shabbat day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;
22 neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Shabbat day, neither do any work; but you are to hallow the Shabbat day, as I commanded your fathers."***

Please note that the purpose of carrying these burdens to which YHWH makes reference in this passage is for the purpose of selling their burdens in the market place. Now notice what YHWH says at the end of verse 22. YHWH states that He commanded their fathers not to do this! YHWH commanded their fathers not to do what? He commanded them not to work upon the Shabbat day, which most assuredly includes buying and selling as well as carrying burdens into and out of the city.

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 1:13-14

13 "Do not bring in a vain present, incense--an abomination it is to Me, New Moon, and Shabbat, calling of convocation! I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly!

14 Your New Moons and your appointed times My soul has hated, they have been upon Me for a burden, I have been weary of bearing them."

When a person or a group of people stop following YHWH and keeping His appointed times in a manner that is pleasing to Him, but begin keeping them according to their own pleasure, then YHWH no longer considers them His Shabbat, New Moons, and appointed times. Please note the use of the word "your," because these people were not keeping these appointed times in a manner that was pleasing to Him.

We have six days to work; and to buy and sell upon those six days. The seventh day belongs to YHWH our Elohim. Therefore, let us refrain from doing our own pleasures upon this day; let us refrain from working and buying and selling and cooking upon this day as He has commanded us to do.

Shemot (Exodus) 31:13-17

13 "You speak also to the children of Israel, saying, 'Surely, you shall keep My Shabbatot; for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am YHWH who sanctifies you.

14 You shall keep the Shabbat therefore; for it is holy to you; every one that profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

15 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Shabbat of solemn rest, holy to YHWH; whosoever does any work on the Shabbat day, he shall surely be put to death.

16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Shabbat, to observe the Shabbat throughout their generations, for an eternal covenant.

17 It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days YHWH made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed."

The weekly seventh day Shabbat is one of the three eternal signs between YHWH and His people that marks them as being His people. The other two signs are circumcision and Pesach (Passover).

Also please note in verse thirteen above that Shabbat is in the plural form – Shabbatot. This indicates to us that it is His desire that we keep and do all of His Shabbatot, which includes not only the weekly seventh day Shabbat, but also the seven annual high Shabbatot.

One of the principles concerning Shabbat that is very important for us to understand is its purpose. The Shabbat was created for man, not man for the Shabbat. Mashiach Yeshua teaches us this very important truth.

Matithyah (Matithyah) 12:5-8

5 "Or have you not read in the Torah, that on the Shabbat day the priests in the temple profane the Shabbat, and are guiltless?"

6 But I say to you, that one greater than the temple is here.

7 But if you had known what this meant, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice', you would not have condemned the guiltless.

8 For the Son of man is Master of the Shabbat."

Doing acts of mercy upon the Shabbat are never out of order. In fact, they are required. I remember years ago early one Shabbat morning I was sitting on my front porch. As I sat there reading and praying my attention was drawn to my neighbor across the road down in the hollow a good quarter of a mile away. I could tell that he was having some difficulty with one of his cows. As I watched I began to feel that I needed to go and see if he needed help. So I put on some regular clothes and walked across the road and climbed the fence and walked down to where he was.

As I approached I called out a greeting and asked if he needed help. He was so very thankful for the help. As it turned out this cow was in labor, but was having trouble delivering the calf. The two of us worked for several hours before we were able to get that calf delivered. Then we worked the rest of the day on the cow. As it turned out the cow died, but we saved the calf. Had I not helped my neighbor who was in need, I doubt that he would even have saved his calf that day.

All this happened upon the Shabbat. Mashiach through His Spirit has taught us to show mercy towards others. This mercy should never be withheld on the seventh day Shabbat. Mashiach Yeshua is the Master of the Shabbat and this is His desire: for His followers to show mercy and compassion, especially on Shabbat.

Marqos (Mark) 2:27-28

27 And He said to them, "The Shabbat was made for man, and not man for the Shabbat;

28 so that the Son of man is Master even of the Shabbat."

Remember, the greatest commandment of all is to love YHWH our Elohim with all of our heart, mind and strength; and the second is like it: to love our neighbor as ourselves. If you had a need in which your life was threatened or the life of one of your loved ones or even the life of one of your animals, then you would do what was necessary to save that life, even on Shabbat. So we must love our neighbor in this same fashion, showing him the same love, care, and concern that we would for ourselves.

Our Master is Mashiach Yeshua. Our master is not the seventh day Shabbat. The Shabbat was made for man, not man for the Shabbat. The Shabbat is not our Master. One cannot serve two masters, only one. Mashiach Yeshua clearly teaches us that the Shabbat is not to be our master when He says that we were not made for the Shabbat, but rather the Shabbat was made for us.

Mashiach Yeshua taught us that in the latter days His followers would be keeping and doing the Shabbat.

Matithyah (Matthew) 24:20

“And pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a Shabbat.”

It will be those who keep and observe the seventh day Shabbat who will be prepared to flee. It will be these who will make it through the season of the great tribulation as overcomers.

It was this verse that YHWH used to open my eyes to His Shabbat and then to bring me into His house of Torah.

May YHWH open our eyes to the importance of His Shabbat and may He teach us to be faithful in keeping it set-apart and holy; in Yeshua’s name. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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