

First Spring Series

April 14	Genesis 2:1-3	Sacred Time, G-d's Special Day
April 21	Exodus 20:8-11	Remembering to Sanctify the Day of Rest
April 28	Exodus 31:12-17	A Generational Sign of G-d's Sanctification
April 5	Exod. 35:3 (12:16)	Taking a Break From All Work
April 12	Leviticus 23:3	Gathering Together for Worship
April 19	Matthew 12:1-13	Empowered and Not Prohibited

Reading: Art p-. 153 and Psalm 128. Jewish Hero: Mary Magdalene. Torah Carrier: Hannah L-rd's Table. NOSH

Shemini **Eighth** **Learning to Be Holy and Separate**

Torah: Leviticus 9:1-11;47

Chapter Nine deals with the rituals which had to be followed to consecrate the newly assembled Tabernacle, so that the presence of G-d could move into it. Previously, the presence had moved off the mountain and hovered over the tent which Moses pitched outside the camp. The presence came into the sanctuary – which was the part of the Tabernacle behind the veil and after they had performed the prescribed rituals, Moses and Aaron both went into the sanctuary and came back out. Fire came from behind the veil and consumed the sacrifices which were on the altar in front of the Tabernacle.

Chapter Ten deals with the two sons of Aaron who put incense in their censers and went into the sanctuary behind the veil. They were killed for breaking the ritual distance between the people and G-d and on a one time only basis, their cousins were given permission to go behind the veil and removed the charred bodies. None of Aaron's family was allowed to mourn, but Aaron did not eat of the atonement offering (which he was supposed to do so that the sins of the people would be fully removed – sort of like us celebrating the L-rd's table). Moses approved this slight departure from the ritual because of the special circumstances (one of the first examples of Halacha).

Chapter Eleven deals with which animals can be eaten because they are clean and which should not be eaten because they are unclean. Biblical kosher deals with what meat is clean (edible) and which is not clean (not edible). The elaborate rules which the Talmud has added to kosher are not taken from the Bible and are not binding on Messianic Jews and Gentiles. Two main additions are misunderstandings of what the text means: not eating blood and not boiling a kid in its mother's milk. The life is in the blood and should be taken before the animal is eaten (ancient Canaanites ate animals alive). Boiling a kid in its mother's milk, was supposed to give those who ate the life strength of the kid and the sexual power of the mother. Food should not be used as a source of spiritual power.

According to chapter eleven, there are five categories of edible animals. (1) 11:2-8: Those who walk on the land. They must have a split hoof that is also separate and they must ruminate (finish digesting their food). Animals with paws are not kosher for food. (2) 11:9-12: animals in the waters. They must have scales and fins. Whales, seals, and shell fish are not kosher. (3) 11:13-19: birds. Carrion and carnivorous birds are not kosher. If it has wings, it must fly and if it flies it must have feathers. Bats and all flightless birds are no kosher. (4) 11:20-23: animals which crawl, called reptiles in some translations, and which fly. They must have jumping legs above their four walking legs – so all manner of grasshoppers are kosher. (5) 11:31, 42 Animals that slither (move about on their bellies, or who have a great number of legs. Snakes and millipedes are not kosher.

Kosher was given to help us distinguish between pure and impure – animals which are clean (edible) and those which are impure (inedible). Bible kosher is not a watered down version of talmudic kosher – it follows the teachings of the Bible and we should not add dietary restrictions which the Bible does not intend to saddle us with.

Haftarah: 2 Samuel 6:1-7:17 Three things in this portion. The Ark was only to be transported on the shoulders of the Aaronites and not in a cart. The ark remained wrapped up and it is doubtful that the Philistines took a peek. When it came home and seventy inhabitants of the town of Beit Shemesh, took a peek, they were smitten by the L-rd (I Samuel 6:19). Aaronites from the nearby town of Kirjath-Jearim, carried the ark into the house of Aminadab, where it stayed until David tried to move it. It blessed the house where it was kept and David wanted this blessing over his house. He wrongly put it in a cart and an Aaronite, Uzzah, was killed when he touched it as it nearly fell over.

David left it where Uzzah fell, in the house of Obed-Edom (from Gath) for three months and when David heard that this house was blessed, he had the ark moved from there on the shoulders of Aaronites, in the prescribed manner and it was brought into a tent in Jerusalem which he had prepared for it. He wanted to build a house for the Ark and gathered all the materials and arranged the worship teams and set up a schedule for the High Priests. He was not allowed to build it, but G-d promised to build David a house (line of descendents) who would always rule over Israel – our Messiah descends from this line.

Just as Abihu and Nadab were killed for not following the prescribed rituals, so was Uzzah and the curious inhabitants of Beth Shemesh.

A juicy tidbit I encountered: *Metheg ha-ammah* (2 Sam. 8:1) the epithet on the Gates of Gath (literally the bridle of the cubit or a bit of the metropolis) – their equivalent of a Mezzuzzah or statement that Gath (David's former city of refuge) had subjugated the other four cities of the Philistines and was claiming to be the principle or chief city of the region. David captured the epitaph from the most powerful Philistine city and showed them who was boss.

Brit Chadashah: Hebrews 7:1-19

This portion deals with the everlasting priesthood of our Messiah, according to the order of Melchizedek, which deals in realities and not symbols, like the Aaronic priesthood. The historical Melchizedek is used as a symbol of our Messiah's superior priesthood and the

historical Melchizedek was a king of Salem who happened to be a priest of G-d. Not all the rulers of this city had this privilege and the last king of Salem is mentioned among the kings who Joshua deposed and killed (Joshua 10:1 Adonai Tzedek being equivalent to Melech Tzedek – it was the title of the Jebusite kings, not their name).

Learning to be holy and separate requires that we distinguish between that which is holy and that which is profane in our lives, so that we can encourage that which is holy and exclude that which is not. It is never automatic and must be learned as we make healthy spiritual choices and avoid unhealthy carnal choices.

Sermon: Becoming Truly Sabbath Powered: Sacred Time: G-d's Special Day (Gen. 2:1-3)

Passage: “And thus were finished the Heavens and the Earth and all their multitude. On the seventh day, G-d finished the work which He had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work which He had done. So G-d blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it because on it G-d rested from all the work that He had done in creation.” (Genesis 2:1-3)

There are two creation accounts in the Bible: Genesis Chapter One and Chapter Two. When chapters and verses were added to the two accounts, in order to avoid giving preeminence to the Sabbath as the crowning glory of the first creation account, the first chapter ends with the sixth day, and the seventh day is wrongly allocated to the beginning of chapter two. It doesn't belong there in the second chapter and the first three verses of chapter two should be seen as the conclusion of the first creation account, which has seven days.

The first creation account ends up with man being the special creation of G-d (male and female) and Sabbath rest is given as the crowning glory of creation. The second creation account deals with the mystery of gender and has a different sequence of events than the first account. In the first creation account, man is created last and is the only element of creation which fully reflects the image of G-d and G-d rests in the completed work of creation.

In the second creation account, man is created as the first life form and the mystery of gender is given as the crowning glory of creation. The two accounts have a different sequence of creation, not because they are two separate accounts, with one being older than the other, but because a hebraic storytelling mode arranges the same details differently in order to highlight different priorities. Neither account is intended to be taken purely chronologically.

The first creation account shows us that time was built into the incredible order which we see in the cosmos and that resting on the Sabbath is the intended acknowledgement of this order. The second creation account shows us the mystery of gender, where womankind and mankind are both unique from all of creation and yet form a union that is a sign of the unique composite oneness of G-d. He is always presented as a plural singularity.

Man and woman form a composite unity – an echad and the oneness of G-d is also an echad, because there is only one G-d and He is a plural singularity – an echad – three distinct persons who exist inseparably as one (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). I do not claim to fully understand the trinity of G-d, but I freely acknowledge that this plural singularity of G-d is how G-d is consistently portrayed throughout the Scriptures. He is always echad (a plural singularity or composite unity) and is never portrayed as a yichad (one and only one).

So both creation accounts portray different aspects of the same reality and are literary accounts which give selective details in order to make a specific point. Creation did not take six literal days and G-d did not rest on a literal seventh day. I usually try and explain this mystery by asking how long did it take G-d to make time? He built time into the fabric of the cosmos and the first creation account shows the order and the harmony which His temporal dominion exercises. There is no chaos or disharmony and the first creation account is the only religious presentation of creation where the Creator precedes creation and does not descend from the primordial chaos which supposedly existed before everything was set in order. He was there prior to creation and it comes from Him and not the other way around.

Chaos was the primordial clay out of which creation was shaped and molded and no longer exists because everything has been set in order and remains under the ultimate control of the G-d who set everything into order. I am a biblical creationist who understands that the days of creation indicate the ultimate and final control which our Creator exercises over the universe which He created. Asking how old the universe is something which science cannot answer, because every particle in the universe is the same age and nothing in our universe is older than anything else. The elements exist in different states and forms, but none of them came into existence before or after each other, because the basic atomic building blocks of our universe all came into existence at the same time.

The seven days of creation indicate the harmony and control over the completed work, which is finished and functions under the complete and utter control of the singular L-rd of the cosmos. Neither account outlines how G-d did what He did, nor does it really deal with how long the process took. The first creation account demonstrates the order and harmony of the universe and the second describes the unfathomable mystery of gender, which is the second testimony to the plural singularity of G-d given in the Bible.

The first testimony is when G-d said let us make man in our image and He made them male and female. Each gender is a unique picture of G-d and neither gender is a better reflection of G-d than the other. Together they form a complete picture of G-d. The second testimony is when the unity of the two genders is referred to as an echad – a plural singularity and this unfathomable reality is how G-d is presented to us throughout the Scriptures.

I am using the first three verses of Genesis chapter two as the beginning of my series on how we can become authentically Sabbath powered, because how we organize our time needs to reflect our commitment to sacred time. This concept of sacred time acknowledges both that the L-rd is the creator of everything, including time and that all that which He created is finished and we need to learn to rest in this completed work. G-d did not rest because He was tired and needed a break. He used Sabbath rest as an acknowledgement that everything He had done was finished and good and that creation is a done deal and not just a work in progress.

The universe is a perfectly functioning megamachine (with apologies to Lewis Mumford), which is moving in an irresistible and irreversible direction, where every part functions in perfect harmony with every other part. And this is a wonderful mystery which is beyond anyone's ability to fully describe. The best way to deal with this unfathomable wonder is to rest in its completeness, and this resting is what the Sabbath is all about.

Resting on the Sabbath both acknowledges the Creator's creation and transforms how we use our time, turning it all into sacred time. In Judaism, we do not name the days of the week, but calculate them according to their position in terms of the Sabbath. Sunday is called the first day of the Sabbath, which means the first day towards the coming Sabbath. Monday is the second

day towards the Sabbath, Tuesday is the third, all the way until Friday, which is called the day before the Sabbath (Erev Shabbat).

When we make our weeks revolve around the Sabbath we are acknowledging both the Creator and the finished work of His creation which we see all around us. Everything in creation has its appointed place and yet the whole of creation is a mystery none of us can fully fathom. It contains an inexplicable simplicity and our first reaction to the wonder of how creation is put together, should be to rest on the seventh day in honour of the Creator who put it all together. It is the day of rest which He established from the beginning of time.

He did not hallow any other day of the week and no other day of the week was set aside as an acknowledgement of His finished creation. Because this creation is finished and complete, He calls us to rest as our primary recognition of both who He is and what He has done. Creation does not need our help for it to be completed, but we have to rest on the Sabbath, in order for us to benefit from this completeness and recharge our spiritual batteries.

The first creation account is described as occurring over seven days, not because that is actually how long it took, but because it gives us a picture of its harmony and completeness. It is a done deal which all functions under the complete and total control of the plural singularity that brought it into being. He has completed it and is at rest and in order for us to fully acknowledge this amazing truth, we have to rest on the day which He set aside for this necessary spiritual discipline. Sabbath rest acknowledges that time is sacred and should be lived in complete and perfect harmony with the Creator of this temporal reality.

I have heard people say that it doesn't really matter which day you set aside for rest and worship, as long as you are acknowledging the Creator, but this is not the testimony of the Scriptures. In this series, we are going to be examining our calling to be authentically Sabbath powered as we learn to rest and recharge on the day which our Creator hallowed and set apart for this function. Spiritual rest was His idea and should be that which drives our lives and that which holds them together as we acknowledge both our amazing Creator and the creation which He finished and which He also holds together.

The seventh day, which we also call the Sabbath, or the stopping time, was established by our Creator as the only day He blessed and the purpose of that blessing is rest. If we are ever to fully understand how to rest in His finished creation, we need to realize that this resting has to occur on the seventh day.

Again, the seven day creation is a literary reference to a literal reality. How long did it really take G-d to build time in the fabric of the cosmos? The answer is of course no time at all. Just as He shall bring the entire universe to a fiery conclusion in the twinkling of an eye, so we can be sure that He also brought it all into being in less time than the twinkling of an eye.

I readily acknowledge that scientists have measured time in terms of how long light is perceived to be moving through the universe and this measurement is called sidereal time or star time. Sidereal time has been measured in terms of millions and billions of years and I do not see this as disputing or disproving the biblical record – not even for one second. The seven day creation is a literary reference to the fact that G-d built time into the fabric of the cosmos. He calls those who acknowledge Him and His creation to rest on the day which He named as holy. How we are to spend this special day will be the subject we will be examining in this series. How old the

earth really is would be a good topic to bring up at our Yeshiva.

On the cross, our Saviour and Messiah cried out that it was finished because He had finished paying the price for the eternal salvation of our souls. We can rest in this, whether we are alive when He returns, or whether we rest in peace until that glorious day. At the end of creation, when everything was finished and set in perfect harmony, G-d set aside a day for us to rest on as we acknowledge Him and His completed creation. He chose the seventh day and called it holy and we are called to rest on this holy day as we contemplate the wonder of who He is and all that He has done. No other day is set aside for this purpose.

Sunday just happened to be the day after the third day and whatever day of the week this day after the third day occurs on, only becomes special because of the resurrection which we are remembering. There has only ever been one special day of the week and that is the seventh day. Every other day of the week should be seen as a stepping stone, leading us towards the one day which alone is holy and that is the seventh day.

The Sabbath alone is the Day of the L-rd and while we do not believe that worshipping on another day will exclude those who do so from entering into the peace of everlasting life, we have to acknowledge that their error will be pointed out to them on the day of judgment.

Whatever loss they suffer will be up to the L-rd to determine, because all believers are called to make their lives turn around the L-rd through His Word and this Word identifies the seventh day as the day we are supposed to rest on as we worship the L-rd.

I have heard of attempts to replace the Sabbath with Sunday, because He rose on the day after the third day, but the Scriptures do not acknowledge any shift and our Messiah was a Sabbath keeper when He walked among us. I have also heard of attempts to replace Israel with the Gentile church as the people of G-d, but the Scriptures do not acknowledge this either. A week has only one holy day in it and that day is the seventh day Sabbath.

Yeshua said that the Jewish people of His day were worshipping G-d in vain, because they taught doctrines which were the commandments of men and not derived from His Word. Sunday worship falls into this category, because this practice is based on the traditions of men and is not derived from His Word.

Yeshua warned us not to think He had come to abolish any of the commandments, but to fulfil them. He also warned us not to break one of the least of these commandments and certainly not to teach others to do so. He does not indicate which of the commandments is the least and which is the greatest, because they are a package deal. We could even argue that they are as indivisible as the plural singularity which is G-d.

Two things could be said at this point. First, the Sabbath is nowhere referred to as one of the least of these commandments and second, even if it were, we are told that we should not break even the least of these commandments. There is no way round not acknowledging that not keeping the Sabbath is breaking one of the commandments of G-d.

Those early believers who resisted Sunday worship were called quartodecimans because they calculated Passover from the fourteenth of Nissan (four plus ten) and refused to always make it land on a Sunday. It could also be said that they were keepers of the fourth of the ten

commandments and wanted to worship on the seventh day and not on the first day of the week. Once the early church moved away from worshipping on the Sabbath, they opened the door to many of the strange teachings which continue to plague those who move away from what the Scriptures teach.

The consistent testimony of the Scriptures, right from the very beginning, is that the seventh day was selected by G-d as the holy day of rest. No other day is ever mentioned as the one which G-d hallowed. The seventh day remains a testimony to the finished work of creation and is the day when G-d intended us to rest. We need to hallow the day which the L-rd hallowed and that is the Sabbath.

Again, He set the seventh day aside for rest and worship and it is the only day of the week which He blessed. Whatever other people decide to do, I want to do what His Word says and I want to do it on the seventh day which His Word sets apart for it. It is the fourth commandment and we should neither break it nor should we teach others to break it.

In this series we are going to look at how we can be truly Sabbath powered and avoid falling for the commandments of men, whether they violate the Sabbath or truss it up with so many restrictions and obligations that it becomes a burden and not a rest. Resting is an important lesson to learn and learning to rest in the finished creation of G-d is even more important lesson to learn.

I agree that we also need to learn to rest in the finished work of the Messiah on the cross, but we need to learn to do this without breaking one of His commandments in the process. The Sabbath is sacred time because the L-rd hallowed it as a day of rest. We need to learn to let our weeks revolve around the Sabbath, because each Sabbath is one more step closer to the return of our L-rd and the beginning of our eternal Sabbath rest.

May the rest of this Sabbath give you lots of rest and may you face the coming week, renewed and focused on the coming kingdom of G-d. Eternity is all that really matters, so let me ask, what really matters to you? Are you remembering to keep the Sabbath holy?

Shabbat shalom and Shavua tov.