



Christians and Shabbat

Celebration not Obligation...

הַשַּׁבָּת הוּכַן בְּעִבּוּר הָאָדָם וְלֹא הָאָדָם בְּעִבּוּר הַשַּׁבָּת

Shabbat was made for man, and not man for Shabbat.

- Yeshua



Yeshua our Sabbath Rest

Since Sabbath observance (i.e., refraining from *melakhah*, or “work”) was given as part of the terms of the covenant given to Israel on Mount Sinai (i.e., it was part of the *Sefer Habrit* given to Moses, and ratified by the 70 elders of Israel through the shedding of the sacrificial blood of animals), Christians are not ‘legally’ required to observe its sanctity - at least not as defined by Jewish religious authorities. In fact, we *cannot* attempt to merit righteousness through rule-following behaviors, no matter how noble or beautiful, since we trust that the finished work of Yeshua *exclusively* makes us right before God (Titus 3:5; Eph 2:8-9). After all, it is the righteousness of *God* saves us...

Indeed - from the perspective of attempting to attain merit through the performance of *mitzvot* - it is clear that Yeshua is the Substance of all the shadows and patterns we find in the Torah of Moses (Col. 2:16-17). Yeshua’s ministry is that of mediation of a better covenant, based upon better promises (Heb. 8:6-7). He is the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) of the true *Mishkan* (tabernacle) not made by human hands, who, through His sacrificial death, has forever obtained an eternal redemption for those who trust in Him (Heb. 9:11-12). It is finished! Yeshua is the way and the truth and the life. He came to give us life in abundance! He came to set us free from the demands of the Torah and its righteous judgment upon us. Those who attempt to ‘serve’ in the Tabernacle of Levi (i.e., under the ritual expression of the covenant given to Moses), have no right to the altar of God’s grace (Heb. 13:10).

The Lord Yeshua is our Sabbath rest (Heb. 4:9), the Giver of peace (John 14:27). He is the One who heals us and delivers us from the shame of our sinful condition. In short, Yeshua is the fulfillment, goal, and answer of all that the Torah of Moses requires of mankind, and we are made right with God by means of His love for us.

‘Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this Man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by Him everyone who believes is *freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Torah of Moses.*’ (Acts 13:39)



So why should we observe Shabbat?

Now while it is true that we do not obtain merit before God for following the laws of the Sabbath, it is nonetheless important to remember that the Sabbath is part of the Torah of the LORD and therefore has eternal worth and significance (Matt. 5:17-19). Followers of Yeshua the Messiah, then, will want to honor the Torah in their hearts by abiding by its true and inner meaning....

Here are some reasons why we should observe the seventh day that the LORD appointed for His people to be a set apart time of rest:

1. The Sabbath remembers God as our Creator (Gen 2:2; Exod. 31:12-17).
2. The Sabbath is one of the first things God blessed (Gen 2:3).
3. The Sabbath remembers *Yetziat Mitzraim* - the Exodus from Egypt (i.e., God's salvation) (Deut. 5:15).
4. The Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12).
5. Yeshua and His disciples observed the Sabbath day and its customs (Mark 1:21, 6:2; Luke 4:16).
6. The Apostle Paul observed the Sabbath (Acts 13:13-42; Acts 18:4).
7. The Sabbath provides a means of identifying with the Jewish people. Learning about the Sabbath improves your Jewish literacy to make you a more effective witness to the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 10:19).
8. The Sabbath is a *delight* – not a burden; a time for celebrating your personal rest in our Messiah Yeshua (Isa. 58:13; Heb. 4:9). Indeed, all those who honor the Sabbath - including the 'foreigners' of Israel - will be given a name that is 'better than sons and daughters' that will never be cut off (Isa. 56:3-8).
9. The Sabbath will be honored in the Millennial Kingdom to come: 'From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD' (Isa. 66:23).
10. The Sabbath will be honored in the heavenly Jerusalem. The Tree of Life is said to yield 'twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month' (Rev. 22:2). Notice that the 'twelve fruits' from the Tree of Life are directly linked to the 'twelve months' of the Jewish year: 'each month rendering its fruit'). In other words, the sequence of the holidays (*moedim*) – including Shabbat - were always intended to teach us great revelation about God. That is why God created the Sun and the Moon for signs and for 'appointed times' (Gen. 1:14; Psalm 104:19).



Making Sabbath your “Delight”

Of course the Sabbath is a *means to an end, not an end in itself*. As the Lord Yeshua taught us, ‘Shabbat was made for man, and not man for Shabbat’ (Mark 2:27). In other words, Shabbat is a gift of God to us, a time of rest and reflection, a joyful time set apart from the busy week when we can focus on what is really important in our lives.

Christians are *not* obligated to observe Shabbat on Saturday; nonetheless we are invited to celebrate a holy day of separation each week. ‘One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.’ (Rom 14:5-6). This is a ‘weaker brother’ issue. We are free to worship the LORD on any day of the week, but note well that we are to worship and to enjoy the principles of *shevat*, or rest in the LORD.

If you perform a Shabbat home ceremony (i.e., Shabbat Seder), please keep these matters firmly in mind. You are not effecting any sort of spiritual merit by performing rituals or acts of tradition, since the Lord Yeshua is our Torah righteousness before the Father. We are not made right with God through anything other than the shed blood of Yeshua on the cross for our sins!

Let me also add that we should *not* observe a Shabbat Seder in the presence of brothers or sisters who may feel that it is ‘legalistic’ or an attempt at ‘self-righteousness.’ Whenever possible we should follow the principle of charity in these matters and yield ourselves to the needs of others. We understand that we are free to enjoy this tradition and to learn from it, but we should not do so if it injures the faith of one our brothers or sisters in the LORD.

May the Lord God of Israel help us all steer clear of the perils of legalism and self-righteousness! It is only through Yeshua, our precious Mashiah, that we are given true rest by the grace of God. Amen.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנו חַגִּים, חֻקֹּת, וּמוֹעֲדִים לְשִׂמְחָה
לְכַבּוֹד יֵשׁוּעַ הַמָּשִׁיחַ אֲדוֹנֵינוּ, אֹר הָעוֹלָם

barukh attah Adonai E·lo·he·nu Me·lekh ha·o·lam,
a·sher na·tan la·nu chag·gim, chuk·kot, u·mo·a·dim le·sim·chah,
likh·vod Ye·shu·a ha·ma·shi·ach A·do·ne·nu, or ha·o·lam

‘Blessed art You, LORD our God, King of the universe,
who has given to us holidays, customs, and seasons of happiness,
for the glory of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, the light of the world.’