

Shabbat and the Gentile

In the beginning of creation Shabbat was instituted as a universal principle for all mankind. Later it became an explicit commandment and sign between God and the Jewish people. Taking into account these two facts, how then does the Gentile relate to Shabbat?

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Secular Zionist Asher Ginzberg once said, “More than the Jewish people have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jewish people.” The observance of Sabbath by Jews for thousands of years has kept the Jewish people together throughout their tumultuous history. The concept of taking one day off in seven is unparalleled in the Ancient Near East.¹ The Sabbath remains one of the greatest innovations of the Bible and the hallmark of Jewish religious life.

Shabbat not only provides a day of rest from the chaos of this world but affords every Jew the opportunity to recharge his spiritual battery and connect with the Divine. It allows one to stay focused on that which is important and lasting, that which truly matters. The work week does not become an end unto itself but a means to reach the holiest day. Exodus 31 also tells us that Shabbat is a covenantal sign of the unique relationship between HaShem and the Jewish people.

Is there a Sabbath rest for Gentile believers in Messiah? Can Gentile believers observe the Sabbath and receive the blessings that come with it without trampling on the unique calling that God has placed on the Jewish people? In this study we will discover that there is place for those of the nations who have joined to Israel to partake in the Sabbath rest.



As Gentile believers, we can find solidarity with the first God-fearing believers who chose to observe Sabbath out of love for God and love for Israel. We can help spread the light of the universal principle of Sabbath.

The Seventh Day

Thousands of years before the Torah is given to Israel at Mount Sinai, God lays the foundation of Shabbat by resting on the seventh day himself:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Genesis 2:1–3)

Although the word “Shabbat” is not explicitly mentioned in Genesis, nor is the narrative in command form, the meaning is clear.² HaShem not only institutes the seventh day as a day of rest but he declares the day as blessed and sanctified. The Sabbath has been set apart as special from all other days. In the words of Nahum Sarna, God imbues the day with “an extraordinary vital power that communicates itself in a beneficial way.”³ In the first six days of creation God established his dominion over space, and now through the Sabbath he establishes dominion over time. The day connects man with sacred time, while at the same time reminding him that his productivity has limits.

Rabbi Chaim ben Attar (1746–1793) in his *Ohr HaChaim*, explains that a less-literal reading of the text can be homiletically said to reveal that the very soul of creation was imparted on Shabbat. He brings in Exodus 31:17 which reads: “on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.” “Refreshed” in Hebrew is *vayinafash* (וַיִּנְפֹּשׁ) and contains the root word *nefesh* (נֶפֶשׁ) which is usually translated as “soul.” Playing on this meaning of *nefesh*, Rabbi Attar comments:

On the Sabbath day G-d created the “soul” of the world ... The plain mean-

ing is undoubtedly that Shabbat vayinafash, because he rested on the seventh day and with it the soul arrived. This means that all creatures were granted an abundance of vitality, something they had lacked previously.⁴

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In his opinion, all of creation—human, beast, vegetation, and even inorganic material—benefits from the holiness of the Sabbath. According to Rabbi Attar, since time began, throughout all generations there have always been those righteous individuals who kept the Sabbath to one extent or another.⁵ It started with the first man Adam, then Seth, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, all the way to Abraham, who became the father of Israel.⁶ The midrash imagines Adam himself composed Psalm 92 “A song for the Sabbath day.”⁷ Therefore, in the opinions of the Sages of Israel, the Sabbath was carried by non-Jews a long while before the baton was handed to the Jewish people.

A Sign between God and Israel

The Sabbath becomes an explicit commandment and a sign between God and the Jewish people only after God delivers Israel from Egypt.

And the LORD said to Moses, “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you ... It is a sign forever

between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.” (Exodus 31:12–13, 17)

The Sabbath is the seal of the covenant that God made with Israel on Mount Sinai and its observance is the “sign” (*ot*, אות) of the unique relationship that God has with the people of Israel. Rashi comments on these verses:

It is a great sign between us that I chose you through My allotting My day of rest for your rest ... That is for the nations to know through it “that I am HaShem Who sanctifies you.”⁸

The Sabbath retains its original meaning from Genesis, as well as taking on the narrower covenantal context with Israel.

Israel alone is set apart from all other nations and chosen to bear his name unto the rest of the world. An ancient midrash comments: “For this is a sign between me and you—and not between me and the nations of the world” (*Mekhilta* to Exodus 31:12). The Sabbath is one of the most definitive, distinctive identity-markers of the entire Torah.

The Sabbath “sign of the covenant” includes observing the numerous Sabbath prohibitions found in the Torah which the sages later classified into thirty-nine prohibitions. None of these stipulations are found in the Genesis narrative where the universal Shabbat principle is introduced. Rabbi Elchanan Adler comments on Sabbath observance within the context of the unique relationship of Israel to HaShem:

A halakhic Sabbath observance ... can be deemed a threat to that relationship when emulated by a non-Jew.⁹

According to this opinion, the observance of Shabbat in a strict halachic Jewish sense is a unique requirement and distinction that applies to Israel alone.

But even in the Exodus 31 narrative we get a sense that there is another aspect to the Sabbath. Not only is it a sign of God’s sanctification of Israel, i.e., the Exodus from Egypt, which is, of course, a uniquely Jewish experience, but the Sabbath is also a sign “that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed,” which is a universal experience. In that way, the Sabbath retains its original meaning from Genesis as well as taking on the narrower covenantal context with Israel. These two distinct purposes are confirmed when we examine Shabbat in the two accounts of the Ten Commandments:

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep (shamar, שמר) the Sabbath day. (Deuteronomy 5:15)

Remember (zachar, זכר) the Sabbath day, to keep it holy ... For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:8, 11)

In the context of the Exodus from Egypt, the injunction is to “keep” or guard the Sabbath, whereas in the context of creation, the injunction is to “remember” the Sabbath. Sabbath therefore serves dual intentions. Is it possible then that there are two different levels or aspects to Shabbat observance?

The Ger Toshav

We find another example of the relationship between Gentiles and Shabbat in the Torah's injunction that the non-Jewish alien is not permitted to be used as a worker on Shabbat.

Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed. (Exodus 23:12)

Ancient Judaism viewed “alien” in this passage as not referring to a convert but rather to the *ger toshav* (“resident alien,” גר תושב).¹⁰ A *ger toshav* is a Gentile who lived among ancient Israel in their nation and was under legal protections from Israel which included receiving charity if necessary. According to the *Talmud*, they were required to make a formal proclamation renouncing idolatry before a Jewish court of law (*beit din*, בית דין) and then, according to one opinion, to keep all of the 613 commandments of the Torah with the exception of the prohibition to eat a *neveilah* (נבלה), i.e. an animal that has died of itself.¹¹ Others, such as Maimonides, feel that the *ger toshav* is merely obligated to obey the seven laws of Noah.¹²

Nevertheless, in Exodus 23:12, we do find another example of Gentile participation in Shabbat. Commenting on this passage, Rashi goes so far as to say that the Torah obligates the resident alien to keep Shabbat.¹³ At the same time though, it is widely accepted that Sabbath restrictions for the *ger toshav* are less stringent than for the Israelite.

It has been taught: A resident alien may do work for himself on the Sabbath in the same measure as an Israelite may do on the intermediate days of the festivals.

R. Akiba says: As an Israelite on the festival.

R. Jose says: A resident alien may do work for

himself on the Sabbath in the same measure as an Israelite on week-days. R. Simeon says: Both a resident alien and a male or female sojourning heathen slave may do work for themselves in the same measure as an Israelite may do on week-days. (b.Keritot 9a)

Rashi goes so far as to say that the Torah obligates the resident alien to keep Shabbat.

Therefore, while the *ger toshav* seems to have been under an obligation to keep Shabbat, it was a different obligation than that of the Jewish citizen.

As a whole, the category of the *ger toshav* is at times difficult to define precisely. According to most halachic authorities, this classification of Gentiles is not applicable today because it is contingent upon the observance of the Jubilee year.¹⁴ However, there are some halachists who believe that the category of the *ger toshav* can be used to justify Gentile Shabbat observance today.¹⁵

Isaiah 56

One of the most commonly cited passages in the Tanach to justify a Gentile's observance of the Sabbath is Isaiah 56.¹⁶ Here we read of God's promises to eunuchs and foreigners; that they too can find a place amongst the Jewish people.

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in

my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” (Isaiah 56:3–7)

If all Gentiles must become Jewish before entering the Messianic Temple, then it should not be called “a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Gentiles and eunuchs are discussed together because both groups have something in common in that they are both outside of the community of Israel: The eunuch because of the law in Deuteronomy 23:1 and the Gentile because he is not Jewish. Yet in the prophecy, HaShem seeks to alleviate these anxieties by promising to reward both the eunuch and the non-Jew who voluntarily takes on the observance of the Sabbath. Rabbi Rabinowitz writes: “The underlying message is that being God’s servant is not dependent upon having Jewish forebears, or upon one’s continued lineage among the Jewish People.”¹⁷

The rabbis are unanimous in interpreting this passage as referring only to those Gentiles who undergo a proselyte conversion and

become Jewish. That is to say, the Gentiles from “all nations” first become Jewish and then attain access to the Temple and the sacrificial services.

The apostles may have understood the reference to the Gentile in this prophecy in the same way, that is, as referring to a formal proselyte, because it says that the Gentile will “hold fast my covenant.”¹⁸ But yet, there is another way of viewing the Gentile in this passage. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* goes beyond the letter to bring out the spirit of this passage:

What matters is that they keep my Sabbaths, choose that in which I delight, and lay hold of my covenant. These people are on God’s side. They love what he loves, hate what he hates, want what he wants. They do not keep the Sabbaths because they must or [else] they will be destroyed. They keep them because they are the Lord’s Sabbaths. Their behavior is an expression of a relationship. This is what God longs for in his people, and if anyone will do this, their parentage or their body has nothing to do with their acceptability.¹⁹

Contrary to the traditional interpretation, we should probably not consider the Gentiles discussed in Isaiah 56 as full, legal proselytes who have become Jewish. If they were, then there is nothing remarkable about their being gathered with Israel or given privileges in the Temple, nor could the Temple then be called a “house of prayer for all peoples.” The full-proselyte leaves behind his identity in a foreign nation. If all Gentiles must become Jewish before entering the Messianic Temple, then it should not be called “a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Therefore, the Isaiah 56 Gentiles must be real Gentiles who have maintained a distinct, non-Jewish identity, and yet taken a place with the nation of Israel. They voluntarily choose to

observe the Sabbath along with Israel.

Perhaps we should place these Gentiles in the larger context of the preceding passages. In chapter 55, HaShem speaks of his Servant the Messiah saying, “Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.” Then he addresses the Messiah directly, saying, “Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you.” (55:4–5).

Therefore, we should understand the Sabbath-keeping Gentiles who join themselves to the God of Israel, to minister to him, and to love the name of the HaShem, to be his servants, and keep his covenant to be the Messiah’s Gentiles. The description fits the God-fearing Gentile believers that have run to take shelter under the King of Israel. In turn, Isaiah 56 establishes precedence for Gentiles in Messiah honoring Shabbat—not because they have to, but because they want to.

In the Synagogue

Let’s now turn to the Apostolic Writings. It is obvious from the Gospels and the book of Acts that the Master and the early Jewish disciples had a high regard for the commandment of Shabbat. The Apostolic Writings contain no hint of the Sabbath being switched from Saturday to Sunday.²⁰ There is no more telling a passage than what we read right after Yeshua is crucified: “On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56). At the pinnacle of their grief and sorrow, these faithful disciples observed the commandant of Sabbath rest just as their Master had taught them. For the Jewish believer in Messiah, Sabbath observance was and is a given.

As for Gentiles, the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 laid out four essential obligations for new believers from the nations. So, while the Jerusalem Council did not bind Gentiles to the Sabbath, they most certainly would not have prohibited them from choosing to rest on Sabbath.²¹ The believing Gentile’s participation in

the Sabbath, along with the rest of the Jewish community, may underlie this curious post-script to the Acts 15 decision:

For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.
(Acts 15:21)

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This oft-argued text might indicate that the Gentile converts attended synagogue along with their fellow Jewish brethren. In fact, we see evidence throughout the book of Acts of Gentile believers attending synagogue.²² It seems to be a general assumption of the apostolic community, and it is relevant to the discussion, because synagogue attendance is one of the hallmarks of Sabbath observance. Obviously, at a bare minimum the Gentile participating in the synagogue did not work on Saturdays. Gentile participation in the synagogue is, in and of itself, evidence that some Gentile believers did observe the seventh-day Sabbath to some degree. Berndt Schaller writes:

*The primitive Christian community largely kept the Sabbath, more strictly in the case of Jewish Christians, but in fact that of some Gentile Christians as well.*²³

There is actually evidence from Josephus and other classical writers that Sabbath observance was widespread among non-Jews in general throughout the Roman Empire.²⁴ Apparently, many of these so-called “God-fearers” found benefit and blessing in ceasing and resting on the seventh day.

The first day of the week (Sunday) began to be honored by believers very early on in the development of the faith.

On the flip side, Paul may seem to indicate in both his letter to the Colossians and to the Romans that Gentiles are not to be judged or condemned on the basis of their Shabbat observance. Both of these letters were addressed primarily to non-Jewish believers in Yeshua:

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. (Colossians 2:16–17)

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. The one, who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. (Romans 14:5–6)

Sabbath observance was a unique sign of God’s relationship with Israel proper and therefore could not be imposed upon Gentile believers, despite the fact that those Gentiles had come to share a spiritual inheritance in

Israel. Nevertheless, these instructions of Paul should not be seen as forbidding a Gentile from observing the Sabbath. New Testament scholar Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra empathetically states that Paul “does not prohibit observing Jewish festivals but only *coercing* Gentiles to observe these festivals.”²⁵ Shabbat observance was not obligatory, but it was certainly not forbidden. The Gentile believers needed a holy day of rest and worship just as the Jewish believers did. As members of the greater commonwealth of Israel, the Sabbath was open to them, and was, in fact, the obvious (and only) choice.

From Shabbat to Sunday

Although Jewish believers continued to be faithful in their practice of Sabbath observance, Sabbatarianism did not last long for the majority of the believing Gentiles. There were hold-outs such as the “Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Jacobites, and Thomas Christians; Oriental Orthodox Churches,” who continued to observe a seventh day Sabbath beyond the first century.²⁶ In fact some scholars believe that some Gentile believers were still attending synagogues on the Sabbath perhaps as late as the sixth century CE.²⁷ Yet, for the most part, Gentile Christianity began to neglect the Sabbath as early as the late first century. How did this happen so quickly? Several scholars reconstruct a logical progression.²⁸

The first day of the week (Sunday) began to be honored by believers very early on in the development of the faith. Christians marked the first day (alongside of the Sabbath) because of the significance of associations with both the resurrection and the giving of the Spirit. In fact we even find subtle evidence of a nascent first-day practice in Apostolic Writings, albeit it is more likely believers originally met Saturday night after the Sabbath when travel, carrying, and cooking restrictions were lifted and they could commemorate the resurrection.²⁹ Among Gentile believers, observance of the seventh day began to fade, perhaps due

to the fact that it grew cumbersome to honor both days. As the Gentile Christian community became severed from the synagogue, Sabbath practice seemed unnecessary and irrelevant. Hostility toward Judaism and a reluctance to be identified as Jews during the tumultuous years between the two Jewish revolts made Gentiles reluctant to be associated with the Sabbath.³⁰ By the end of the first century, Gentile Christians openly opposed believers who still kept Sabbath. Hostility toward Sabbatarians was heightened by the increasing desire of Gentile believers to make a formal break from Judaism. As early as 105 CE, Ignatius declares that Christians are “no longer keeping the Sabbath but living in obedience to the Lord’s Day [i.e. Sunday].”³¹ Within a short period of time, the practice became universal in Gentile churches, and the switch became all but canonized.

There were other factors at work here as well. There was not only the increasing desire for Christians to separate from Jews but a desire by Jews to separate from Christians. Here’s what the *Talmud* says about Gentiles keeping Shabbat:

Resh Lakish also said: “A heathen who keeps a day of rest, deserves death, for it is written, ‘And a day and a night they shall not rest’ (Genesis 8:22), and a master has said: ‘Their prohibition is their death sentence.’” Rabina said: “Even if he rested on a Monday.” (b.Sanhedrin 58b)

The death penalty is not meant literally (the synagogue had no such authority in the Talmudic era) but rather expresses the severity with which the sages viewed this transgression.³² Nevertheless there is a strong desire on the part of the sages to discourage Gentiles from keeping Shabbat. The reasons might have been two-fold: to keep Shabbat as a uniquely covenantal sign for Jews and a sense of irritation about Christians keeping Shabbat. A textual variant for this Talmudic passage has been

found that contains the word *akkum* (עכו"ם) which literally means “idolater” and not just Gentile. Theodore Friedman writes:

Probably when Resh Lakish stated that a gentile (akkum etc., in existing texts) who observed the Sabbath is punishable by death, he had in mind Christians.³³

Why would the Talmudic-era sages not want Christians to observe Shabbat? Bar Ilan professor Abraham Weiss proposes an interesting solution:

From the 29th ordinance of the council of Laodicea we learn that at the time all the church members did not yet accept Sunday as the Sabbath-day and day of rest. Some of the members rested on the seventh day, and it appears that among these there were also some who thought that in keeping the Sabbath they were, so to speak, establishing closer contact with Judaism. The Church fought against those who rested on the Sabbath and sought ties with Judaism by excommunicating them.³⁴

We are attempting to resurrect something that had been lost for thousands of years.

So the *Talmud*, along with the church, discouraged and even forbade Christian Gentiles from observing the Sabbath in order to create a cleaner distinction between the two religions and to prevent intermixing. When we add all these circumstances together, we can begin to get a picture of how Sabbath observance all but completely disappeared from the early Gentile church.

Although there have been small pockets of believers keeping a seventh-day Sabbath throughout history, such as the Transylvanian believers in the Late Middle Ages /Early Modern Period and even today with the Seventh-Day Adventists and Seventh-Day Baptists, almost all of Christendom favored Sunday over Sabbath. It is really only in our day and age that we see such a widespread trend of believing Gentiles returning to the seventh-day Sabbath. Indeed, we are attempting to resurrect something that had been lost for thousands of years.

Gentiles in Messiah should feel free to honor the Shabbat and join in with the rest of Israel.

Conclusion: Observance with Distinction

Before we draw some practical conclusions about Sabbath observance for Gentiles, here are three key points we have learned:

1. The principle of Sabbath was established in Genesis at creation and it was universal in scope.
2. The commandment of Sabbath was given exclusively to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai as a sign of Israel's unique relationship with HaShem.
3. While the apostles did not bind the Sabbath on Gentile believers, many of the early non-Jewish believers voluntarily embraced the Sabbath as a natural outcome of their participation in Judaism and spiritual membership in the commonwealth of Israel.

I am a Gentile Sabbath-keeper. As those of us who are Gentiles seek to go back to the faith and practice of the earliest God-fearing believers, many of us will be drawn into honoring

the Sabbath on some level. In our observance of the Sabbath, it is important that we honor the Jewish people's unique relationship with the Sabbath.

Rav Yoel Schwartz, an expert in Jewish law as it relates to non-Jews, writes: "A [non-Jew] should not observe the Shabbat in the manner that a Jew does."³⁵ While at first glance many of us might balk at this, we have to remember that to Rabbi Schwartz full observance of Shabbat involves the full weight of the thirty-nine prohibitions of Shabbat halachah, including not using any electricity or driving in a car or even carrying an object in one's pocket. At the same time Rabbi Schwartz tries to find a balance between allowing Gentiles to receive the blessings of the Sabbath day, without compromising the distinct sign of Israel. He goes on to say:

There is room to suggest that the [Gentiles], even nowadays, by accepting to fulfill the seven commandments, are in the same category as a Ger Toshav ["resident alien"] and should, according to Rashi, be required or at least allowed to keep the Shabbat.³⁶

Practically, he goes on to suggest a Sabbath day where Gentiles refrain from work, enjoy festive meals, and study Torah. He does not have believers in view, and therefore takes no thought for how Gentile believers might relate more to a Jewish observance of the Sabbath.

Gentiles in Messiah should feel free to honor the Shabbat and join in with the rest of Israel, even observing some of the customs of the Jewish people. After all, Shabbat was originally a universal expression. On the other hand, it may not necessarily be advisable for a Gentile to embrace a fully-halachic observance of the Sabbath, especially outside of a Jewish community. At the same time, although a Gentile will probably not be observing all of the traditional stringencies which Jewish law places around the Sabbath, he should have respect for his Jewish brother who does.

Jew and Gentile both need a holy day to set aside for rest and sanctification. We need a time to connect with both our family and God himself. Sabbath is the day we prepare for ahead of time, so all we are left to do is enjoy and delight in this precious gift. You might even say that as the world becomes more and more hectic and our lives become more and more busy, the practice of Shabbat becomes more and more important. Orthodox Rabbi Shmuley Boteach envisions a time when many from all nations will begin to observe a seventh day of rest:

In this epoch of cell phones, beepers, E-mail, and fax machines, humans are subjected to work and noise seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. We are rarely afforded a moment of solitude. I predict that more and more people, Jews and non-Jews, will begin to embrace that particularly Jewish observance of the Sabbath as a way to quiet the clamor and to regain a sense of balance and peace. Get ready to see non-Jewish families setting aside one day a week in which they don't answer the telephone, rent videos, or surf the net. Modern-day amusements are as incarcerating as they are liberating, and we all need a break. Every Saturday will be designated as an uninterrupted family day, during which cell phones and Palm Pilots are switched off.³⁷

May it be for the whole world! Yet, how much more so is this applicable to those of us from the nations who have been grafted into the olive tree of Israel through Messiah! As Gentile believers, we can find solidarity with the first God-fearing believers who chose to observe Sabbath out of love for God and love for Israel.

We can help spread the light of the universal principle of Sabbath, a principle in which all mankind can find benefit, goodness, holiness, and blessing. 

We can find solidarity with the first God-fearing believers who chose to observe Sabbath out of love for God and love for Israel.

Endnotes

- 1 Some scholars suggest that the seventh-day Sabbath is related to the Babylonian mid-month celebration of the new moon called *šapattu* and the Babylonian seven-day intervals, yet this remains speculative and unfounded.
- 2 Although the noun “Shabbat” (שַׁבָּת) is not present in the text of Genesis, the verbal form *shavat* (שָׁבַת) does appear twice.
- 3 Nahum Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 15.
- 4 Rabbi Chayim ben Attar, *Or HaChayim: Commentary on the Torah* (trans. Eliyahu Munk; New York: Lambda Publishers, 1999), 47.
- 5 *Midrash Rabbah* relates a tradition that the Israelites kept Shabbat in Egypt (*Exodus Rabbah* 1:28, 5:18). Exodus 16:23 may even allude to the Israelites observing Shabbat according to an unwritten oral tradition. The text literally states: “And [Moses] said unto them, ‘It is that which the LORD has spoken of; a rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD is tomorrow.’” The phrase “It is that” is the Hebrew word *hu* (הוּא), perhaps referring to something in the past. Perhaps Moses refers to “that” which the Israelites already knew.
- 6 Rabbi Attar, *Or HaChayim: Commentary on the Torah*, 51.
- 7 *Genesis Rabbah* 22:13.
- 8 Translation from Rabbi Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated* (5 vols.; Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1994), 2:442.
- 9 Elchanan Adler, “The Sabbath Observing Gentile: Hashkafic and Liturgical Responses,” *Tradition* 36:3 (2002): 14–45.
- 10 b.*Yevamot* 48b.
- 11 See b.*Avodah Zarah* 64b. The Talmud allows the *ger toshav* to eat *neveilah* because Deuteronomy 14 forbids an Israelite to eat the carcass of an animal that dies of itself, but it permits the Israelite to give it to a *ger* (“stranger,” גֵּר). There also appears to be a less formal type of *ger toshav* who does not make a formal declaration before a *beit din* and therefore is not legally eligible for protection and support (b.*Avodah Zarah* 65a).

- 12 *Mishneh Torah, Issurei Bi'ah* 14:7.
- 13 Rashi's commentary to b.*Yevamot* 48a.
- 14 *Mishneh Torah, Issurei Bi'ah* 14:8.
- 15 Rabbi Yoel Schwartz, "Noahide Commandments," in *Service from the Heart* (ed. Rabbi Michael Katz et al.; Rose, OK: Oklahoma B'nai Noah Society, 2007), 235–292.
- 16 My exegesis of Isaiah 56 relies heavily on *Torah Club Volume Three, Voice of the Prophets* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2010) commentary on *Ta'anit Tzibbur Minchah*.
- 17 Rabbi Chaim Dov Rabinowitz, *Da'ath Sofrim: Commentary to the Book of Yeshayahu* (New York: H. Vagshal Publishing, 2006), 471.
- 18 For more on conversion and the foreigner, see Aaron Eby, Toby Janicki, Daniel Lancaster, and Boaz Michael, "Divine Invitation: An Apostolic Call to Torah," 51–54 [Cited 22 April 2010]. Online: http://ffoz.org/_php/download.php?file=Divine_Invitation.pdf.
- 19 John Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40–66* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company), 458.
- 20 Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), 74–131.
- 21 Cf. David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 630.
- 22 E.g., Acts 13:16, 13:44, 14:1.
- 23 Berndt Schaller, "Sabbath," *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* 4:788–791.
- 24 Josephus, *Against Apion* 2:40; J. Hugh Michael, "The Jewish Sabbath in the Latin Classical Writers," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 40:2 (January 1924), 117–124.
- 25 Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, "'Christians Observing Jewish Festivals of Autumn,'" in *The Image of Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 53–73.
- 26 Berndt Schaller, "Sabbath," *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* 4:788–791.
- 27 Angelos Chantiotos, "Godfeaters in the City of Love," *Biblical Archeology Review* 36:3 (May/June 2010): 32–44, 77.
- 28 For a detailed and thorough study of this progression see Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*.
- 29 The day in the biblical calendar starts in the evening and not at midnight as in Roman reckoning, therefore darkness on Saturday announced the beginning of the first day of the week. E.g. Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2.
- 30 Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 213–235.
- 31 *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians* 9.
- 32 See Emil G. Hirsch and Judah David Eisenstein, "Gentile," *Jewish Encyclopedia* 5:615–626. Note that the common phrase for "[neglecting] the words of the Rabbis one deserves death" (b.*Eruvin* 21b). See also *Mishneh Torah, Melachim* 10:9 and Clorfene and Roglasky, *The Path of the Righteous Gentile* (Southfield, MI: Targum press, 1987), 42.
- 33 Theodore Friedman, "Gentile," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (2nd Edition) 7:486. Also Hirsch and Eisenstein, "Gentile," *Jewish Encyclopedia* 5:615–626 and Abraham Weiss "Shevitat Akum," *Bar-Ilan Annual* 1 (1963): 143–148, xxxi–xxxii. Maimonides makes a similar proscription about a Gentile observing Shabbat deserving death (*Mishneh Torah, Melachim* 10:9). Once again though, it appears that Maimonides is speaking of the idolater and not the God-fearing Gentile. The Chatam Sofer (1762–1839) observes, "See Rambam, Laws of Kings, chapter 10, halachah 9 and 10, where it appears that he distinguishes between an idol worshiper and a Ben Noach, who is one that has accepted upon himself not to be an idolater; and for such a person it is permitted to cease [from work on the Sabbath] and to fulfill any commandment that he desires; and from such a person they accept sacrificial offerings, teach him Torah, and accept charity from him" (Commentary on b.*Chullin* 18a).
- 34 Weiss "Shevitat Akum," xxxi.
- 35 Schwartz, "Noahide Commandments," 262.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Shmuley Boteach, *Judaism for Everyone: Renewing Your Life through Vibrant Lessons of the Jewish Faith* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 3.

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