

Sabbath Rest

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He **rested** on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He **rested** from all His work which God had created and made. This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. (Genesis 2:1-4)

When Adonai our Elohim finished creating, He rested. He then set aside one day of the week devoted to doing just that, resting. The concept of resting was apparently very important to Adonai, for He included the command to rest within the Ten Commandments.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may **rest** as well as you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day. (Deuteronomy 5:13-15)

Notice that not only does Adonai want us to rest, but He also wants us to allow those who are around us to rest as well. This theme is repeated throughout Scripture. The Torah, the writings and the prophets all agree that Adonai wants His people to rest; yet we refuse to do so. This has always been the way, it seems, as Jeremiah tells us:

Thus says the LORD, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find **rest** for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'" (Jeremiah 6:16)

Nothing had changed by the time Yeshua walked the earth, for He continued the same theme in His teachings, even quoting Jeremiah:

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you **rest**. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS**. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
(Matthew 11:28-30)

Do you have any idea how often Adonai mentions "rest" in His Word? There are at least eight Hebrew words and six Greek words that are translated into the English word "rest." As we have just seen, resting is something that HaShem Himself does and is included within the Ten Commandments. This is obviously something that is very important to Him. So what's our problem? Why do we have such a hard time with the concept of resting?

When I say we, I specifically mean those of us who live with the American mindset of "nose to the grindstone" and all that. The average American doesn't take nearly the amount of time off from work that the rest of the civilized world does. We work longer hours than our parents did and we're not really making that much more than they did. In fact, when you figure in the cost of living, inflation, and the devaluation of the dollar, today's two-income household is actually bringing in less money than our grandfathers did on their own. And we have less time with our children than they did. What is going on here?

As the old saying goes, "Stress kills." It has been proven that stress disrupts proper thyroid functions, especially in women. Thyroid problems are increasing yearly in this country, most notably in women. In fact, heart disease, lung cancer, breast cancer and many other diseases are on the increase in women and one can't help but wonder if stress has anything to do with this increase. Apparently "Super-mom" isn't all she's cracked up to be.

In this day and age, most countries mandate vacation time for their citizens. All companies must comply and provide vacation time for both their full- and part-time employees. The United States is the exception. Even Japan mandates a minimum of ten vacation days per year for all of their workers, and has developed a Leisure Department to help workers to realize that it is okay to take a break from work. We could use something like that here in the States. Although the average American worker has two weeks of paid vacation time, this does not apply to part time workers. The average British employee receives 24 days of vacation time.

The London-based Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) Group starts their British employees off with 26 vacation days as

well as eight holidays. An American employed by a subsidiary of HSBC would have to work for ten years to acquire that kind of benefit package. What's up with that? The British seem to be more productive as well. In fact, the most productive group of people is the French, and they also happen to be the ones with the most vacation time. The government mandates a minimum of five weeks of paid vacation and a maximum of 35 hours of work per week. And when they go on vacation, they don't call the office and check in... neither are they expected to do so.

In comparison, the average American doesn't even take all of their vacation days, and the days they do take tend to be in bits and pieces, taking long weekends here and there throughout the year, never getting a full week off and often not taking all of their days. According to Expedia.com 35% of the workforce (translates into roughly 51 million people) does not take all of their vacation days.

I remember years ago hearing how in the future we would have four-day workweeks and more free time than ever before. Whatever happened to that? It has never materialized. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the average American worker (let's call him Joe) is working 100 hours more per year than he did back in 1970, which averages out to be an added 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ weeks every year. The average Jane (female employee) is working a whopping 200 hours more now than then, for a total of five added weeks. It seems that the average Jane is working right through the average Frenchman's vacation. Something is not right here.

Not only are we working longer hours, we are also sleeping less. Our parents slept an average of one to two hours more, every night, than Joe and Jane. This lack of sleep is taking a large toll on our health. Sleep is the time when our bodies digest food, grow and heal. Children especially do not get the amount of sleep necessary for them either. Most kids stay up past 10 o'clock in the evening and have to be ready for their bus around 7 o'clock in the morning. Sure, that may be eight hours of sleep, but children need more than eight hours. My grandmother used to say, "In bed by eight, up by seven; the hours we sleep are eleven." Her teacher taught her that.

Management Recruiters International surveyed 730 U.S. executives in 2003. When asked about vacations, 45% stated that they do not use their vacation time. Of those, 58% cited job pressure as the main reason. Of those, 17% replied that their boss was not supportive of vacation time and 35% stated that there simply is too much work to do. It seems to me that

these folks are afraid of losing their jobs if they take the vacations given to them.

When we don't rest, we tend to get sicker, easier. Circadian Technologies did a study in 2004 that showed high overtime rates had a direct effect on absenteeism. Overtime rates in this country went from 12.6% in 2003 to 16.2% in 2004. That amounts to almost one extra workday per week. At the same time absentee rates jumped from 5.8% (2003) to a whopping 12.4% in 2004.

All of this information has caused the Braun Consulting Group to recommend to their clients that they give their employees more flexible time off, including both vacation and sick days and to limit overtime so that they will have a reduction in their absenteeism and an increase in their productivity. But even if big business finally begins to listen and gives us the time off that we need and deserve, will we take it?

The average American does not know how to rest. Many of us would have a hard time defining rest. Wikipedia defines rest as, "to relax or take time off (leisure); period of inactivity to allow recovery and growth." I especially like the second part of the definition, because that is exactly what we need to understand; resting allows recovery and growth and is, in fact, vital for both. Without rest, and good sleep, we cannot maintain good health and cannot recover from poor health. Why do you think hospitals are always telling their patients to rest?

Rest is also defined as the cessation of work, exertion or activity, and the peace, ease or refreshment resulting from sleep or the cessation of an activity. Rest is like quiet relaxation, a mental or emotional tranquility. It is also the relief or freedom from disquiet or disturbance. It is a quieting of the mind, body and spirit and is truly the only way for one to hear the word of God.

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. (Psalms 46:10)

How often does He tell us to be still? Do we listen? Do we listen as well as we should? Do we know how to be still? This is something that many of us struggle with. We understand the value of resting, but there is just so much to do and so little time. We literally live to work. We should be working to live. I don't know of any good man who, on his deathbed, declared, "Oh, I wish I would have spent more time at the office!"

There are at least eight Hebrew words that are translated as rest. Noah's name even has connotations of resting because it means, "repose;

consolation; to comfort." Nacham literally means, "To sigh, to regret; to be sorry; to console oneself." Have you ever thought of confessing and resting as being hand-in-hand? They should be. One cannot fully rest until one has confessed their sins to Adonai. Only after receiving His forgiveness can we truly rest in Him.

"For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a **sabbath of complete rest**, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He *ceased from labor*, and was refreshed." (Exodus 31:15-17)

The word Sabbath itself means to rest. Shabbath shabbatone is translated as Sabbath of complete rest. It can also be defined as an intermission of rest or even a special holiday. God intended us to have one of these every single week. He says so in His book (see above). Adonai loves us so much that He wants to take care of us, like any good husband would take care of his wife. He knows that our bodies need to rest regularly in order to maintain good health. He designed us that way.

Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, and said, "My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and **rest** yourselves under the tree; and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may **refresh** yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant." And they said, "So do, as you have said." (Genesis 18:1-5)

Abraham was a man known for his hospitality. He would do whatever it took to make his guests comfortable. The first thing he did for his guests was to wash their feet, as the road was quite dirty and they would only have been wearing sandals. This was not something that one did unless they expected their guests to stay awhile. This is also evident in the word he used for rest: shaan, which means to lean, or to support oneself. The Brown-

Driver-Briggs defines it this way: to lean on, trust in, support; to lean, lean upon, support oneself; of trust in God (figuratively).

Ultimately, that is what it all comes down to, isn't it? Trusting in God. To truly lean upon Him to provide for our every need is what we need to learn. To be so totally reliant upon Him that we don't even think about what our needs are should be our goal. Abraham wanted his visitors to know that they need not worry about a thing, because every little thing would be provided. We would greatly reduce our stress if we could learn to depend on Adonai like this at least one day per week.

Notice that Abraham wants his guests to feel refreshed. Saad, translated as refresh, also means to support, comfort, establish, hold up, refresh self, strengthen, and to be upholden. One can almost hear a bit of a southern twang... "Set a spell; kick your shoes off... ya'll come back now, ya hear?" The Lord was so impressed with this display of hospitality that He decided to discuss His plans with Abraham. Truly this man understood God's heart.

It is within God's heart that we should rest. It is so very important to Him that the word Sabbath literally means to rest. The fourth command is to, "Remember the Sabbath day." That means, "Remember to take a day of rest." This was so important to Adonai that not only did He make it one of the Ten Commands, but He also made it one of the longest.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and **rested** on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy."
(Exodus 20:8-11)

Were we made in Adonai's image? He took a break at the end of a long workweek; why shouldn't we? Do we really think that the world cannot go on without us? Or are we afraid that it actually will? Well, it will go on without us if we don't take the time to rest and refresh ourselves for the long journey ahead.

Look, it's as simple as this: if we want to stay healthy, we have to stay both fit and rested. We cannot have one without the other. They truly must go hand-in-hand. We can eat all the right foods, get plenty of exercise and

still be sick simply because we didn't rest. It is during our times of inactivity, and especially our times of sound sleep, that allow our bodies to maintain proper balance and health.

Most importantly, HaShem said that Sabbath, resting, at the end of the week is a sign between He and the children of Israel forever. This is how we show Him that we are the children of Abraham. This is how we demonstrate our love for Him, by following His command to rest. Are we truly Israelites, or are we just playing around? Is it a religion or a relationship? Do we trust Him? Truly? In all things... even our time?

So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:9-11)

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