

should not be seen as a day of prohibitions, but a day of delight (*Yeshayahu/Isaiah 58:13*).

When we are struggling to get to the end of our week, what a delight indeed to find a day of rest waiting for us—a day to switch off the cell phones and unplug from all the stress and busyness around us! In fact, such a delight is this day that Hebrew essayist Ahad Ha'am taught: "More than the Jewish people have kept the Shabbat, the Shabbat has kept the Jewish people." Throughout history, the Shabbat has kept the Jew and has preserved the nation. Imagine if all creation was thus "kept" by the Shabbat. We can only imagine the magnitude of such a blessing.

The Shabbat is not only a day of ceasing work, but also a day of communing with G-d. Simply resting is one thing; being spiritually restored and renewed is quite another. The seventh-day Shabbat is a day of spending time with the Creator, just as humanity did in Eden. G-d Himself was walking with them in the Garden. We no longer can be with G-d in Eden, but, as the sages say, we can still have a taste of this blissful intimacy one day a week as the seventh-day Shabbat is a sample of the Heaven that awaits.

G-d spoke of Israel, "I will also give thee for a light of the nations" (*Yeshayahu/Isaiah 49:6*). It is true that the Jewish nation has been anointed to be "a light to the nations." What does this mean? This is a weighty honor, to be sure, as this is a divine commission to bring the light of Torah to a dark and dying world. Watching the news will prove to us just how overwhelming this task could seem. The world today is anything but light, and the majority of the Western world is wallowing in the darkness of greed, lust for power, and egoism. Too many are sinking in an insatiable sea of self-seeking. Where do we start if we wish to be a light? We can begin with a simple, beautiful gift that reminds us that we are only a part of something bigger, that we are a beloved creation and not the Creator—the blessing of the Shabbat.

Seventh-day Adventists also observe the seventh-day Shabbat. Treasuring the joys of the Shabbat, Seventh-day Adventists seek to spread the light of this beautiful, age-old commemoration to all, too, in hopes of spreading the peace of Shabbat to all the world.

References taken from the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) Bible, 1917.



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THE Shabbat keeps us

Giving Light to Our World

The Shabbat Keeps Us

We often feel that there is a great separation between today's era and ancient ones thousands of years ago. Many things in the world have changed in contemporary times, but one thing remains the same—the seven-day week. Eras and empires have come and gone, and yet we still today are scheduling our very post-modern lives into a seven-day week. Where does this week come from? The seven-day week comes from creation. In six days the Creator brought the universe into being, and He rested on the seventh. What does this tell us about the timelessness of the way we calculate days? We have preserved, for thousands of years, the very time structure that the Creator set up for us originally. "And G-d blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which G-d in creating had made" (*Bereshit/Genesis* 2:3).

While we all admit that the seven-day week structure is still valid, there are many who would doubt the other part of the Creation story—the part where the seventh day was set aside and made holy for all time. If we hold that the seven-day week is yet a legitimate institution, why is it that many of us fail to agree that the division of

that very same week (six days to work with the seventh to rest) is not also in full effect?

Some of us do, however, believe that this division of the week is still valid. Some of us do understand that the seventh day was set aside as special for all of creation during that first week of the world's existence. For millennia, the Jewish people have honored the seventh-day Shabbat as the day of rest in holy commemoration of the Creator's rest during that original creation week.

The Shabbat Is For Whom?

Some would say that it is only the Jewish people today who should be celebrating the seventh-day Shabbat. This belief is interesting, especially in the light of the fact that G-d instituted the Shabbat before tribes of humanity were established, well before the time of Abraham—in the very Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*). Some hold that Noah, a righteous biblical representative of the "non-Jew," didn't hold to the Shabbat, and therefore other non-Jews today also do not need to keep it (commonly referred to as "Noahide Laws"). This is an unfortunate speculation because Noah had a very good understanding of G-d's laws including the idea of *kashrut*—the separation between clean and

unclean, *kosher* and *treif*, so to speak; thus we have no reason to doubt that he had knowledge of the other laws of his Creator, including the Shabbat. G-d spoke to Noah, saying, "of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee seven and seven, each with his mate; and of the beasts that are not clean two [and two], each with his mate" (*Bereshit/Genesis* 7:2). Thus, Noah knew much of the laws of the Torah, which wasn't officially given to Israel and the nations until much later.

In *Shmot/Exodus* 20:1, it says, "G-d spoke all these words." The rabbis teach through midrash that when G-d spoke at Sinai, His words of Torah were heard in the seventy languages known at the time, symbolizing the whole world, as it were (*Shmot Rabba* 5:9). If the Torah were only for Israel, why would it need to be heard in all the known languages at the time? This implies that the law was given, again, to all the existing tribes, tongues and nations of the world.

In the Torah itself, the injunction is to "remember the Shabbat to keep it holy" (*Shmot/Exodus* 20:8-11). Oddly enough, the saying, or *mitzvah*, most forgotten in today's society is the very one beginning with "remember." Furthermore, not only is the hearer of the law to keep the Shabbat holy by doing no work, but the beasts of burden are also to rest.

Even the "stranger that is within thy gates" is to observe the Shabbat. There is no mention of whether or not this stranger is Jewish (even with an assumption, correct or not, that the audience is solely Jewish). If the Author of the Torah forbids work for animals upon the Shabbat, how much more should all of humanity, creatures of His very image, rest upon this day?

Therefore we can conclude that the seventh-day Shabbat is not only timeless, as is our seven-day week, but universal as well. The Shabbat is for all creation, to include each nation, language, and tribe, to include the very animals that we employ. The Scriptures tell us that Shabbat is "everlasting" and eternal. This timelessness binds us today just as tightly as it bound our ancestors millennia ago as a sign for us to remember that our Creator is the one who sets us apart for Him (*Shmot/Exodus* 31:13).

Day of Delight

Perhaps one of the reasons that the seventh-day Shabbat is not more widely accepted is that many grossly misunderstand it. It is not an injunction upon us to inhibit our life and liberties; it is an enhancement and preservation of the life and freedoms that we enjoy. The Shabbat