

What Do We Do On The Sabbath?

After coming to the realization that the Sabbath is an important commandment that must be obeyed the next logical step for most individuals is to seek out how to obey the Sabbath commandments

A first step is to look at the specific commandments concerning what is required and or prohibited.

The next step is to evaluate our lives and determine what we do on the day and whether is appropriate or inappropriate for this set apart day.

The primary Commandment concerning the Sabbath is the Fourth Commandment which reads as follows:

“⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is the Sabbath of YHWH your Elohim. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days YHWH made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore YHWH blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart.”

Exodus 20:8-11

The other commandment concerning the Sabbath is found in Leviticus. *“Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of YHWH in all your dwellings.”* Leviticus 23:3.

Notice both call it Holy and both state NO work is to be done

This is something that we see on Yom Kippur – possibly the Holiest Day but this prohibition of NO work stands in stark contrast to the other High Days when “servile” or “customary” work is prohibited.

- * First and Last days of Feast of Unleavened Bread - Lev 23:7-8
- * Feast of Shavuot - Lev 23:21
- * Feast of Trumpets – Lev. 23:23
- * First and Last Day of the Feast of Tabernacles - Lev 23:34-36

The Hebrew word used concerning the Sabbath and Yom Kippur is “malakha” (מלאכה) which generally means: “business or enterprise.”

So we have a distinction presented in the other high days which “maleket abadah” (עבדה) (מלאכה) which generally refers to work in the service of others.

Therefore it appears that you should not have anyone working for you nor should you be working for someone else or yourself on the Sabbath (Shabbat).

This seems straightforward enough but besides work it is also called holy – “qadosh” (קדוש) which means: “set apart”. It is a holy convocation – “kadosh miqra” (קדש מקרא) which means: “a set apart rehearsal.”

So what are we rehearsing on Shabbat? There was a pattern established on the first week of creation. In Genesis 2:1-3 we read:

“¹ Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ² And on the seventh day Elohim ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then Elohim blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which Elohim had created and made.”

Notice that Elohim rested from “all His work” on the seventh day of creation – the first Shabbat.

If we are doing NO work on the Sabbath then what are we to do?

There is no formula, no list of do’s and don’ts unless you follow Talmudic Law, which I believe is missing the point entirely.

The Prophet Isaiah proclaimed:

“¹³ If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My set apart day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the set apart day of YHWH honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, ¹⁴ Then you shall delight yourself in YHWH; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.”

Isaiah 58:13-14

It appears that we need to take this one day and set aside our own pleasures which are “hapatseeka” (הפצ׳יך) and means: “delight, desire or purpose”. Instead we are encouraged to: “tit’anag (תהענג) in YHWH” which is also often translated as “delight” but more accurately refers to being: “soft, pliable and delicate in YHWH”.

So what does it mean to tit’anag (תהענג) in YHWH? We find an answer in the Psalms.

“³ Trust in YHWH, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. ⁴ Delight yourself also in YHWH, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. ⁵ Commit your way to YHWH, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. ⁶ He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. ⁷ Rest in YHWH, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. ⁸ Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret — it only causes harm. ⁹ For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on YHWH, they shall inherit the earth. ¹⁰ For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more. ¹¹ But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”
Psalms 37:3-11.

This passage should give anyone enough to chew on for a long time.

The point of the Sabbath is not to limit a person or make them miserable by imposing restrictions on their movement or activities. To the contrary, it involves focusing our sights on Him and allowing Him to make the necessary changes so that He can lift us up to a higher place where we find his bounty and blessings. If we approach the Sabbath with that in mind, it should not be a problem determining how to spend this set apart day.