

The instruction to remember the Sabbath is the Fourth of the Ten Commandments: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. You shall labor six days, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You shall not do any work in it" (Exodus 20:8-10a, WMB). The seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat* is widely associated with God's creation of the world (Genesis 2:2-3) and the Exodus of Ancient Israel from Egypt (Deuteronomy 15:15). The Sabbath is one of the Torah's *moedim* or appointed times (Leviticus 23:3). Desecration of the Sabbath actually brought judgment to Ancient Israel (Jeremiah 17:19-27), but blessings are offered to those who value and honor *Shabbat* (Isaiah 56:1-8), with a universal observance for the entire world anticipated in the Messianic Age (Isaiah 66:23).

Today's Messianic movement is different from evangelical Protestantism, in that while it affirms the Messiahship of Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth, it continues to observe the seventh-day Sabbath along with Judaism, in fidelity to the Torah or Law of Moses, and in conjunction with the example of the First Century Believers. Certainly, holding services on the seventh-day (commonly called Saturday) can be viewed as appropriate for a faith community identifying with the Jewish Synagogue, but it also raises many questions. *Inquiries abound pertaining to the ongoing validity of the Sabbath in the post-resurrection era.* Was not the Sabbath transferred to Sunday, in honor of the Messiah's being raised from the dead? Was the Sabbath actually abolished by the Messiah? *Inquiries abound pertaining to the observance of the Sabbath.* Should not the Sabbath be kept according to the Scriptures only? Should not mainstream Jewish tradition and custom play some role in honoring the Sabbath? What does it mean to not "work" on *Shabbat*?

The Messianic Sabbath Helper includes a breadth of material, addressing a wide array of topics associated with *Shabbat*. This publication has been divided up into two main parts: *The Significance of Shabbat* and *A Theology of Shabbat*. You will be able to detect a progression of sorts, in our family's own approach to the subject matter, as some things are addressed first more generally and then more specifically. In our experience, we ourselves have certainly had to move from a more elementary view of the issue of the seventh-day Sabbath, to a more developed view, and we recognize how the Messianic community needs to do the same.

MESSIANIC

SABBATH HELPER

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edited by Margaret McKee Huey
with J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Messianic Sabbath Helper

© 2004, 2015, 2025 Messianic Apologetics

edited by Margaret McKee Huey, with J.K. McKee

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as *TWOT* for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: Greek New Testament
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: King James Version
Lattimore: The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah

MARV: Messianic Apologetics Revised Version*

MT: Masoretic Text

NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)

NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)

NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*

NEB: New English Bible (1970)

Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*

NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)

NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*

NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*

NIV: New International Version (1984)

NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)

NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)

NKJV: New King James Version (1982)

NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)

NLT: New Living Translation (1996)

NT: New Testament

OT: Old Testament

REB: Revised English Bible (1989)

RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)

t. Tosefta

Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament

Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)

TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition

v(s). verse(s)

Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*

Vul: Latin Vulgate

YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

Introduction

The instruction to remember the Sabbath is the Fourth of the Ten Commandments: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. You shall labor six days, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You shall not do any work in it" (Exodus 20:8-10a, WMB).ⁱⁱ The seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat* is widely associated with God's creation of the world (Genesis 2:2-3) and the Exodus of Ancient Israel from Egypt (Deuteronomy 15:15). The Sabbath is one of the Torah's *moedim* or appointed times (Leviticus 23:3). Desecration of the Sabbath actually brought judgment to Ancient Israel (Jeremiah 17:19-27), but blessings are offered to those who value and honor *Shabbat* (Isaiah 56:1-8), with a universal observance for the entire world anticipated in the Messianic Age (Isaiah 66:23).

Today's Messianic movement is different from evangelical Protestantism, in that while it affirms the Messiahship of Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth, it continues to observe the seventh-day Sabbath along with Judaism, in fidelity to the Torah or Law of Moses, and in conjunction with the example of the First Century Believers. Certainly, holding services on the seventh-day (commonly called Saturday) can be viewed as appropriate for a faith community identifying with the Jewish Synagogue, but it also raises many questions. *Inquiries abound pertaining to the ongoing validity of the Sabbath in the post-resurrection era.* Was not the Sabbath transferred to Sunday, in honor of the Messiah's being raised from the dead? Was the Sabbath actually abolished by the Messiah? *Inquiries abound pertaining to the observance of the Sabbath.* Should not the Sabbath be kept according to the Scriptures only? Should not mainstream Jewish tradition and custom play some role in honoring the Sabbath? What does it mean to not "work" on *Shabbat*?

There are many important issues surrounding the seventh-day Sabbath which today's Messianic people have posed to them by Christian outsiders, as well as are posed to them by those within their own assemblies—and even by Jewish outsiders trying to see how they keep *Shabbat*. Frequently, a mindset can prevail that the seventh-day Sabbath is little more than "Saturday church," when in fact in both Scripture and

ⁱⁱ Also Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

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Jewish tradition, *Shabbat* is to be a time of rest, refreshment, and delight. Even with various limitations present throughout Christian history, Protestant traditions which adhered to a "Sunday Sabbath," often recognized it as a time to focus on activities such as fellowship with other Believers, Bible study, and an abstention from labors.

Our family has been a part of the Messianic movement since 1995, and we have been involved in full time Messianic ministry since 2003. We have very much seen the different currents and dynamics present within our faith community regarding the subject of the seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat*, and how people on *both* the outside *and* inside have approached this issue. As a family of non-Jewish, evangelical Believers, who were steadily led to embrace their Jewish Roots throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s—particularly as we were exposed to the Messianic significance of the Biblical holidays or appointed times—we naturally moved from being Sunday churchgoers to keeping *Shabbat*, as we became members of a Messianic Jewish congregation in 1995. However, very early on in our Messianic experience, keeping *Shabbat* on Saturday was little different than a kind of "Saturday church," even with the Messianic service having traditional Hebrew liturgy, a Torah scroll, Davidic dancing, and various charismatic elements. As we progressed further in our Bible studies, there were changes implemented, as God's people are directed by Him to actually rest on *Shabbat*. We altered a number of our activities, especially as they involved abstention from commerce and the need to physically take a break and slow down.

Over the years of interacting with people across the broad Messianic spectrum, we have definitely had to counsel many Messianic people, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, over how they can best make the Sabbath a holy and special time for themselves, their families, their friends, and their neighbors. This publication as it presently exists, the *Messianic Sabbath Helper*, has been a long time coming for our ministry.ⁱⁱⁱ There have been a number of other lengthy books released by Outreach Israel Ministries before this, and our books have certainly written about various aspects of *Shabbat*—but we have now arrived at a point when we believe that enough has been communicated "out there" in the world of ideas, to now offer a lengthy compilation on the various components of the Sabbath issue. A huge amount of literature and writing—Jewish, Christian, Messianic, etc.—has been consulted to evaluate where we think God's people should be moving regarding the seventh-day Sabbath and rest. We have been very encouraged about what we have found among both Jews and Christians—

ⁱⁱⁱ The record does show that in 2004, Outreach Israel Ministries did release a 75-page spiral comb bound edition of the *Messianic Sabbath Helper*, with only five chapters. This much larger 2015 release (updated 2025) follows the basic format of the 2014 *Messianic Kosher Helper* (also updated 2025).

many of whom believe it is absolutely imperative for God's own to recapture a sense of rest—something which can only serve the positive interests of today's Messianic movement which we all serve and compose, as Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are brought together as "one new humanity" (Ephesians 2:15), in anticipation of our Lord's return.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) said, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, WMB). No truly born again Believer we have ever encountered, at least in our experience, thinks that the principle of rest is something evil and immoral. While there is a definite spiritual rest which comes to those who have been forgiven of their sins and released from the anxiety which comes from the guilt of sin—there are doubtlessly also benefits present in physically resting, as the whole human person is sanctified.^{iv} And, a future rest in the Messianic Age and the Eternal State is one which still awaits the redeemed, as the author of Hebrews admonished, "Let's therefore give diligence to enter into that rest..." (Hebrews 4:11, WMB). **Our family believes that *Shabbat* is the best day of the week**—as it not only gives us a time to transition our routine from the mundane to the sacred, but it allows us to focus on the Lord and on our fellow brothers and sisters in a very unique and special way. While for our Christian family of past generations, a faithful tradition of making Sunday a holy time and Sabbath-period can be seen—*Shabbat*, especially with the Jewish emphasis on the local synagogue being a closely-need community of people, **has become something we eagerly look forward to**. While we have special and sacred memories of attending Sunday church services in the past, **we have special and uniquely dynamic experiences of attending *Shabbat* services and resting in His *shalom* in the present!**

As you prepare to read the *Messianic Sabbath Helper*, you will see that the material has been divided up into two main parts: **The Significance of Shabbat** and **A Theology of Shabbat**. You will be able to detect, among some of the chapters, a progression of sorts in our family's own approach to the subject matter, as some things are addressed first more generally and then more specifically, with a repetition of some points in various places. We ourselves have certainly had to move from a more elementary view of the issue of the seventh-day Sabbath, to a more developed view. We have had to fine-tune our approach to various passages, and be a bit more engaged with their interpretation, per both Hebrew and Greek issues, as well as various views present in more technical theological resources and commentaries. And most of all, like many, we certainly have had to moderate our own approaches and attitudes at times over the years.

^{iv} Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

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Do not let the size of this book intimidate you! Part I is actually the size of our *Messianic Winter Holiday Helper*, and Part II is only slightly larger than *The New Testament Validates Torah*. While we could have taken Part II and released it as a second book, we could not run the risk of readers not having a fuller view of the issues and Bible passages requiring analysis. While this does not represent the “final word” on the topic of the Sabbath and rest for Messianic people, the *Messianic Sabbath Helper* may be said to be an encyclopedic volume, to aid both Messianic families and those in Messianic congregations, on many of the aspects involving *Shabbat*.

Shabbat Shalom!
Margaret McKee Huey
with J.K. McKee

THE
SIGNIFICANCE
OF SHABBAT

PART I

-1-

A Summarization of Jewish Shabbat Traditions

Margaret McKee Huey and J.K. McKee

That the Jewish people have widely and faithfully observed the seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat*,¹ throughout their history, is a testament to God's declaration in Exodus 31:16: "The Israelite people shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout the ages as a covenant for all time"² (NJPS). The view of a Conservative Jewish figure like Samuel H. Dresner, in his book *The Sabbath*, presses how

"It is one of the basic institutions of humanity—an idea with infinite potentiality, infinite power, infinite hope, perhaps, as some claim, the single most significant contribution of Judaism to world culture" (*The Sabbath*).³

The need for people to rest and sanctify a day unto their Creator has resonated for Torah-faithful Jews to be certain, as well as many Christian Believers, over the centuries.

If there is any area where today's Messianic movement tends to absolutely excel, it is with integrating a wide selection of the mainline Jewish traditions and customs for observing the Sabbath. Regardless of their background before coming to Messiah faith, religious or secular, today's Messianic Jews tend to remember *Shabbat* with the common

¹ Pronounced as *Shabbos* in the Ashkenazic Jewish tradition.

² Heb. *l'dorotam b'rit olam*.

³ Samuel H. Dresner, *The Sabbath* (New York: The Burning Bush Press, 1970), 14.

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elements of lighting candles, breaking *challah*, drinking wine, and attending synagogue services with traditional liturgy and Torah readings. Non-Jewish Believers who have been led by the Lord into the Messianic movement, seeking to embrace more of the Jewish Roots of their faith, have also taken a hold of *Shabbat*, the opportunity for rest it offers to the people of God, and many of the significant traditions which can make the Sabbath a very holy and sanctified time.

The Hebrew term ***Shabbat*** itself mainly involves the “**day of rest, sabbath**” (*CHALOT*).⁴ There is debate, for sure, regarding how close this noun should be associated with the verb *shavat*, “**cease, desist, rest**,” with *TWOT* broadly noting that

“There is still some question as to whether the noun *shabbāt* is derived from the verb *shābat*, or whether *shabbāt* is primary, and the verb derived from it. In any case, it should be observed that the meaning of *shābat* is ‘to rest’ in the sense of repose only when the verb is used in a Sabbath context” (*TWOT*).⁵

Whether the Sabbath, for example, was instituted as a Creation ordinance or as just a memorial of Creation (cf. Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:11), is a theological debate, with multiple sides represented among both Jews and Christians. Yet, even with some difference of opinion, the relationship of the noun *Shabbat* and verb *shavat* still communicates, as indicated by Ronald L. Eisenberg, that this is a “day of rest and refraining from work” (*JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions*).⁶ One indeed is to cease and desist from normal activities on the Sabbath day.⁷

Those who recognize the importance of *Shabbat*, and the admonition for the seventh-day (“Saturday” on the Western calendar) to be sanctified, enter into a special time between themselves, among themselves, and most importantly the Creator God. Keeping the Sabbath holy, both as a means of obedience to God and recognizing what it has meant to the Jewish people throughout the ages, is most vital for all of us. Most people in today’s Messianic community do not think of *Shabbat* rest as a time when

⁴ William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1988), 360.

⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, “*Shabbat*,” in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:902; also Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 1407.

⁶ Ronald L. Eisenberg, *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 125.

⁷ Encountered in the Greek Septuagint and Apostolic Scriptures is the term *sabbaton*, “the Hebrew *sabbath*, i.e. Rest, N.T.; also in pl. of the single day, heterocl. dat. pl. [*sabbasi*] (as if from [*sabbasi*])” (H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 722).