

The instruction to remember the Sabbath is the Fourth of the Ten Commandments: "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" (Exodus 20:8-10a). 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 Christianity, 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 wide 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.

This is a massive collection of material, well needed for every Messianic home and congregational library!

MESSIANIC

SABBATH HELPER

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edited by Margaret McKee Huey
with J.K. McKee

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Messianic Sabbath Helper

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

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Abbreviation Chart and Special Terms

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that 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.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>
Ara: Aramaic	ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)	exegetis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	Ger: German
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	GNT: Greek New Testament
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	Grk: Greek
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	Heb: Hebrew
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	

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)

LS: *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell & Scott)

LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)

LXX: Septuagint

m. Mishnah

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*

NIGTC: *New International Greek Testament Commentary*

NICNT: *New International Commentary on the New Testament*

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

orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world

OT: Old Testament

PME: Practical Messianic Edition of the Apostolic Scriptures

PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*

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*

TEV: Today's English Version (1976)

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

TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*

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

WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*

Yid: Yiddish

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

Introduction

The instruction to remember the Sabbath is the Fourth of the Ten Commandments: “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” (Exodus 20:8-10a).ⁱ 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 Christianity, 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 that 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

ⁱ Also Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

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is little more than “Saturday church,” when in fact in both Scripture and 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 Christian Believers, who were steadily led to embrace their Hebraic 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 we had to make, as God’s people are directed by Him to actually rest on *Shabbat*. We had to alter 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 Believers, 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.ⁱⁱ 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 in 2015 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 all of

ⁱⁱ 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 follows the basic format of the 2014 *Messianic Kosher Helper*.

A five-chapter excerpt from this publication’s Part I, *Shabbat: Sabbath for Messianic Believers*, intended mainly as a congregational handout, was released in April 2015.

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—**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 the emerging Messianic movement that 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 who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). 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 that comes to those who have been forgiven of their sins and released from the anxiety that comes from the guilt of sin—there are doubtlessly also benefits present in physically resting, as the whole human person is sanctified.ⁱⁱⁱ And, a future rest in the Messianic Age and the Eternal State is one which still awaits the redeemed, as the author of Hebrews admonishes, "Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall..." (Hebrews 4:11). **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 (years noted), 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

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

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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.

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



A Summarization of Jewish Shabbat Traditions 2015

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."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 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 Hebraic and Jewish Roots of

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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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 that 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.”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 the *JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions* by Ronald L. Eisenberg, that this is a “day of rest and refraining from work.”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)⁸ 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 they can just sleep all day long; they do recognize that there are edifying and Spirit-inspired traditions, many of which were observed during the time of Yeshua of Nazareth, which should be

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. [*sabbas*] (as if from [*sabbas*])” (H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 722).

⁸ Here we cannot overlook how our widely secular Western calendar is affected by terms originating in Greco-Roman paganism, as the seventh-day or “Saturday” does originate from the Old English “*Sæterdæg*, Saturn’s day” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, second edition [Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, Inc, 2002], 568).