

**MESSIANIC**  
SABBATH HELPER

## MESSIANIC HELPER series

*Moedim: The Appointed Times for Messianic Believers*

***Messianic Sabbath Helper***

*Shabbat: Sabbath for Messianic Believers*

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# MESSIANIC

SABBATH HELPER

edited by Margaret McKee Huey  
with J.K. McKee

**MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS**  
[messianicapologetics.net](http://messianicapologetics.net)

# 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>	exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	Ger: German
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	GNT: Greek New Testament
Ara: Aramaic	Grk: Greek
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)	<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	HALOT: <i>Hebrew &amp; Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)
b. Babylonian Talmud ( <i>Talmud Bavli</i> )	HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	Heb: Hebrew
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old &amp; New Testament)</i>
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	KJV: King James Version
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore</i> (1996)
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	

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).<sup>1</sup> 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 about 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 about 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 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

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<sup>1</sup> Also Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

# Messianic Sabbath Helper

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.<sup>ii</sup> 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 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.<sup>iii</sup> 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 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*

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<sup>ii</sup> 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.

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

**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* (שַׁבָּת)<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup>" (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."<sup>3</sup> 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 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* (שַׁבָּת) itself mainly involves the "day of rest, sabbath" (*CHALOT*).<sup>4</sup> There is debate, for sure, regarding how close this noun should be associated with the verb *shavat* (שָׁבַת), "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."<sup>5</sup> Whether the Sabbath, for example, was instituted as a Creation ordinance or as just a memorial of Creation (cf. Genesis 2:2-3;

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<sup>1</sup> Pronounced as *Shabbos* in the Ashkenazic Jewish tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *l' dorotam b'rit olam* (לְדֹרוֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם).

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

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

<sup>5</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, "שָׁבַת," 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.

# Messianic Sabbath Helper

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.”<sup>6</sup> One indeed is to cease and desist from normal activities on the Sabbath day.<sup>7</sup>

Those who recognize the importance of *Shabbat*, and the admonition for the seventh-day (“Saturday” on the Western calendar)<sup>8</sup> 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 followed today. The value of these traditions is witnessed in how they bring consistency to one’s weekly routine, and a sense of unity and community to those who keep them. If there is anything negative to be observed, the exact places where many of the mainline Jewish *Shabbat* traditions originate, do need to be documented—from their origins in Scripture, Second Temple Judaism, or in post-Second Temple Rabbinic literature.

## Sabbath is the Fourth Commandment

The seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat* is quite unique, in that it is not just a weekly observance for the people of God; it is the Fourth of the Ten Commandments. As Exodus 20:8 declares, *zakor et-yom ha’Shabbat l’qad’sho* (זָכוֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ), “Remember the day, *Shabbat*, to set it apart for God” (CJB). The Sabbath is observed from what we reckon as sundown on Friday evening to sundown on Saturday evening, per the statement appearing multiple times throughout Genesis 1, “And there was evening and there was morning, one day” (Genesis 1:5), with the new day beginning in the evening.

There are a number of key admonitions surrounding *Shabbat*, which appear in the Torah or Pentateuch, later elaborated upon in the Tanach, and certainly appealed to in various ways in the Jewish theological tradition:

- ***Shabbat* is a memorial of God’s Creation:** “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” (Genesis 2:1-3).
- ***Shabbat* is to be a permanent sign between God and His people:** “But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for *this* is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you’” (Exodus 31:13).
- **God’s people must expel the effort to actually observe *Shabbat*, in order for the day to be made holy:** “Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you” (Deuteronomy 5:12).
- ***Shabbat* is to be a time when the Exodus of Ancient Israel from Egyptian servitude is remembered:** “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land

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

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

<sup>8</sup> 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).



## A Summarization of Jewish Shabbat Traditions

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 5:15).

- **Shabbat is to be a time when people cease from their labors, in particular any heavy manual labor:** "You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; *even* during plowing time and harvest you shall rest" (Exodus 34:21).

Most frequently, one sees in the Torah how the institution, of the seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat*, is closely tied to God's Creation of the world or the Exodus. Keeping the Sabbath is certainly connected to recognizing the God of Israel as supreme over the cosmos and the affairs of humankind, and in celebrating His salvation acts in history. It is to be astutely witnessed that while the Torah considered idolatry against God to be among the most serious of offenses (Exodus 23:24; Deuteronomy 4:25), that in the estimation of Eisenberg, "the exilic and post-exilic prophets considered profanation of the Sabbath the most damaging religious violation" (Isaiah 58:13-14; Ezekiel 20:11-12).<sup>9</sup> **Shabbat is not at all to be something just casually dismissed.**

### Biblical Sabbath Observance

Throughout the Torah and Tanach, some key things were observed by the Ancient Israelites, in order to sanctify the Sabbath. A special offering of two lambs, in addition to the daily burnt offering, were presented at the Tabernacle/Temple (Numbers 28:9-10; cf. 1 Chronicles 23:31; 2 Chronicles 8:12-13; 31:2-3). Twelve loaves of showbread were to be presented at the Tabernacle/Temple (Leviticus 24:5-9; 1 Chronicles 9:32; 2 Chronicles 2:4). The severity of the Sabbath is realized in how an Israelite gathering wood was actually stoned to death (Numbers 15:32-36). While a cessation from general labor was to be recognized on the Sabbath, this did not apparently apply to guard duty at the king's palace in Jerusalem (2 Kings 11:4-12). It may also be deduced that various forms of travel likely did take place on the Sabbath (2 Kings 4:23-24).

The Torah and Tanach do mention various **types of work prohibited**, some of it specific. This included field labor (Exodus 34:21),<sup>10</sup> the kindling of a fire (Exodus 35:2-3),<sup>11</sup> commerce and various types of lifting heavy objects (Jeremiah 17:22;<sup>12</sup> Nehemiah 10:31;<sup>13</sup> cf. Amos 8:5), various forms of travel outside of a specific area (Exodus 16:29-30),<sup>14</sup> and treading wine presses and loading animals (Nehemiah 13:15-18).<sup>15</sup>

While canonical Holy Scripture mentions various forms of prohibited work and activity, literature germane to Second Temple Judaism and the time following, would elaborate significantly—with differences of opinion and application to also be witnessed for sure—regarding

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<sup>9</sup> Eisenberg, 127.

<sup>10</sup> "You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; *even* during plowing time and harvest you shall rest" (Exodus 34:21).

<sup>11</sup> "For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy *day*, a sabbath of complete rest to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day" (Exodus 35:2-3).

<sup>12</sup> "You shall not bring a load out of your houses on the sabbath day nor do any work, but keep the sabbath day holy, as I commanded your forefathers" (Jeremiah 17:22).

<sup>13</sup> "As for the peoples of the land who bring wares or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the sabbath or a holy day; and we will forego *the crops* the seventh year and the exaction of every debt" (Nehemiah 10:31).

<sup>14</sup> "'See, the LORD has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.' So the people rested on the seventh day" (Exodus 16:29-30).

<sup>15</sup> "In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading *them* on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of loads, and they brought *them* into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. So I admonished *them* on the day they sold food. Also men of Tyre were living there *who* imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold *them* to the sons of Judah on the sabbath, even in Jerusalem. Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, 'What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the sabbath day? Did not your fathers do the same, so that our God brought on us and on this city all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath" (Nehemiah 13:15-18).

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how *Shabbat* was to be properly kept. This is especially true as the locus for observing *Shabbat* became focused more around the home and local synagogue.

### The Importance of the Sabbath in Second Temple Judaism, and Major Sabbath *Halachah*

While the Torah or Pentateuch itself does issue various Biblical stipulations for observing the Sabbath, along with various applications present in the remainder of the Tanach—attempting to make the Sabbath holy, and evaluating what could and could not be done on *Shabbat*—constituted a major part of emerging Jewish practice in the post-exilic era. That there would be some significant discussions and debates emerge, following the end of the Babylonian exile, is hardly surprising, given the fact that non-observance of the Sabbath was believed to be one of the major factors responsible for the exile. The assertion of *Jubilees* 2:29 is, “Make known and recount to the children of Israel the judgment of the day that they should keep the sabbath thereon and not forsake it in the error of their hearts. And (make known) that it is not permitted to do work thereon which is unlawful, (it being) unseemly to do their pleasure thereon.”<sup>16</sup>

Those who returned to reestablish a presence in the Holy Land, and be faithful to God’s commandments, understandably wanted to develop systems whereby Jews could be considered obedient to the Sabbath instruction. With populations both in the Land of Israel and in a widespread Diaspora, the focus of *Shabbat* would decisively be one’s localized home and localized Jewish community. Unlike various appointed times, such as *Yom Kippur* or Passover, and their required sacrifices<sup>17</sup>—it was much easier for the home to become the central nexus for observance of *Shabbat*. As the *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* describes, “in the rabbinic period, [the Sabbath] attained a special place as a weekly observance that in the absence of the cult [and sacrifices], could continue as a family holiday practiced in individual homes.”<sup>18</sup>

A wide degree, of very strict Sabbath regulations, is witnessed in the materials of the Qumran community. Among some of their significant practices include things that many would consider to be legitimate derivations of Torah instructions, while other things would be considered (quite) excessive by other sectors of Second Temple Judaism:

“About the Sabbath, how to keep it properly. A man may not work on the sixth day from the time that the solar orb is above the horizon by its diameter, because this is what is meant by the passage ‘Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy’ (Deut. 5:12). On the Sabbath day, one may not speak any coarse or empty word. One is not to seek repayment of any loan from his fellow. One may not go to court about property or wealth. One may not discuss business or work to be done the next day. A man may not go about in the field to do his desired activity on the Sabbath. One may not travel outside his city more than a thousand cubits. A man may not eat anything on the Sabbath day except food already prepared. From whatever was lost in the field he may not eat, and he may not drink unless he was in the camp. If he was on a journey and went down to bathe, he may drink where he stands, but he may not draw water into any vessel. One may not send a Gentile to do his business on the Sabbath day. A man may not put on filthy clothes or clothes kept in wool unless he washes it in water or if they scrub it with spice. A man may not voluntarily cross Sabbath borders on the Sabbath day. A man may walk behind an animal to graze it outside his city up to two thousand cubits. One may not raise his hand to hit it with a fist. If it is uncooperative, he should leave it inside. A man may not carry anything outside his house, nor should he carry anything in. If he is in a temporary shelter, he should not take anything out of it or bring anything in. No one should open a sealed vessel on the Sabbath. No one should carry medicine on his person, either going out or coming in, on the Sabbath. No one should pick up stone and dust in an inhabited place. No caregiver should carry a baby on the Sabbath, either going out or coming in. No one should provoke his servant, his maid, or his employee on the Sabbath. No one should help an animal give birth on the Sabbath; and if it falls into a well or a

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<sup>16</sup> O.S. Wintermute, trans., “Jubilees,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 58.

<sup>17</sup> Obviously, there are components of the yearly appointed times that can be observed in homes, but the transition of the appointed times into a home and synagogue affair, was only completed after the destruction of the Second Temple.

Consult the relevant volumes of Messianic Apologetics’ *Messianic Helper* series, on the Spring, Fall, and Winter holidays.

<sup>18</sup> “Sabbath,” in Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 538.

## A Summarization of Jewish Shabbat Traditions

pit, he may not lift it out on the Sabbath. No one should rest in a place near to Gentiles on the Sabbath. No one should profane the Sabbath for wealth or spoil on the Sabbath. Any living human who falls into a body of water or a cistern shall not be helped out with a ladder, rope, or other instrument. No one should offer any sacrifice on the Sabbath except the Sabbath whole burnt offering, for so it is written, 'besides your Sabbaths' (Lev. 23:38)" (CD 10.14-11.18).<sup>19</sup>

Also rather strict in their own right, are the various rulings witnessed in *Jubilees* 50:6-13:

"And beyond the commandment of the sabbaths I have written for you and all of the judgments of its law. Six days you will work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD your God. You shall not do any work in it, you, or your children, or your manservant or your maidservant, or any of your cattle or the stranger who is with you. And let the man who does anything on it die. Every man who will profane this day, who will lie with his wife, and whoever will discuss a matter that he will do on it so that he might make on it a journey for any buying or selling, and whoever draws water on it, which was not prepared for him on the sixth day, and whoever lifts up anything that he will carry to take out of his tent or from his house, let him die. You shall not do any work upon the day of the sabbath except what you prepared for yourself on the sixth day to eat and to drink and to rest and to observe a sabbath from all work of that day and to bless the LORD your God who gave to you the day of festival and the holy day. And a day of the holy kingdom for all Israel is this day among their days always. For great is the honor which the LORD gave to Israel to eat and to drink and to be satisfied on this day of festival and to rest in it from all work of the occupations of the children of men except to offer incense and to bring gifts and sacrifices before the LORD for the days and the sabbaths. This work alone shall be done on the day of the sabbath in the sanctuary of the LORD your God so that they might atone for Israel (with) continual gift day by day for an acceptable memorial before the LORD. And so that he might accept them forever, day by day, just as he commanded you. And (as for) any man who does work on it, or who goes on a journey, or who plows a field either at home or any (other) place, or who kindles a fire, or who rides on any animal, or who travels in sea in a boat, and any man who slaughters or kills anything, or who slashes the throat of cattle or bird, or who snares any beast or bird or fish, or who fasts or makes war on the day of the sabbath, let the man who does any of these on the day of the sabbath die so that the children of Israel might keep the sabbath according to the commands of the sabbaths of the land just as it was written in the tablets which he placed in my hands so that I might write for you the law of each time and according to each division of its days."<sup>20</sup>

Various of the stipulations seen above, in both the DSS and Pseudepigrapha, do include interpretations that would be adhered to, even today, among Jews keeping *Shabbat*. At the same time, it is hardly surprising that many of these sorts of regulations have stirred the interest of Biblical scholars, given how there are conflicts between Yeshua of Nazareth and various Jewish leaders, recorded in the Gospels, over Sabbath application. As is noted by S. Westerholm and C.A. Evans in the *Dictionary of New Testament Background*,

"With laws whose scriptural background seemed clear, and with customs long and widely established, many Jews could be expected to comply. It can also be seen, however, that questions of proper observance were often a matter of interpretation. The various religious parties of Jesus' day not infrequently differed in their practice. And though each group doubtless pressed on the others the claims of its interpretation to represent the will of heaven, such claims in our period were terrestrially unenforceable."<sup>21</sup>

Disagreements that would be detectable between the Messiah, and various Jewish leaders of the Second Temple period, would often be over observances of Sabbath restrictions that would be less strict than those witnessed at Qumran, among others. In *Jubilees* 50:8, intercourse between a husband and wife is prohibited on the Sabbath; in the Talmud it is (later) encouraged that sexual relations take place on the evening opening the Sabbath, *Erev Shabbat* (b.*Bava Qama* 82a;<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), pp 68-69.

<sup>20</sup> Wintermute, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2, 142.

<sup>21</sup> S. Westerholm and C.A. Evans, "Sabbath," in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, eds., *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 1032.

<sup>22</sup> "That is on account of the requirement that sexual relations take place on Friday night, as it is written, 'That brings forth its fruit in its season' (Psa. 1:3), and said R. Judah, and some say, R. Nahman, and some say, R. Kahana, and some say, R. Yohanan, 'This refers to one who has sexual relations on Fridays'" (b.*Bava Qama* 82a; *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. MS Windows XP. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. CD-ROM).

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b.*Ketuvot* 62b<sup>23</sup>). The Sabbath distance listed in CD 10.20 is a thousand cubits, whereas two thousand cubits (around a thousand yards if a cubit is regarded as being 17.5-18.0 inches) is the more standard distance for a Sabbath day's journey (cf. Exodus 16:29; Acts 1:12) witnessed in Rabbinical literature (m.*Eruvim* 4:3;<sup>24</sup> 5:7;<sup>25</sup> b.*Eruvim* 51a<sup>26</sup>).

While the attitude at Qumran in the DSS was apparently *not* one of helping others on *Shabbat* who needed intervention (CD 11.13, 16), this is not the overall Jewish attitude, which was very much favorable toward helping others in various levels of distress. A general approach, as witnessed in the Mishnah, details how the prohibitions of working on *Shabbat* can be overridden—ranging from the need to give someone medicine to clearing away a building that has fallen on a person:

"Further did R. Mattiah b. Harash say, 'Who who has a pain in his throat—they drop medicine into his mouth on the Sabbath, because it is a matter of doubt as to danger to life. And any matter of doubt as to danger to life overrides the prohibitions of the Sabbath.' He upon whom a building fell down—it is a matter of doubt whether or not he is there, it is a matter of doubt whether [if he is there], he is alive or dead, it is a matter of doubt whether [if he is there and alive] he is a gentile or an Israelite—they clear away the ruin from above him. [If] they found him alive, they remove the [remaining] ruins from above him. But if they found him dead, they leave him be [until after the Sabbath]" (m.*Yoma* 8:6; further discussion in b.*Yoma* 85a-b).<sup>27</sup>

While the standard *halachah* or orthopraxy of the Pharisees was to be lenient in terms of a life needing to be saved on *Shabbat*, of critical importance are the thirty-nine main prohibitions, widely taken from Exodus 35, in terms of the activities required for the construction of the Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant. The main list frequently referenced comes from m.*Shabbat* 7:2:

"The generative acts of labor [prohibited on the Sabbath] are forty less one: (1) he who sews, (2) ploughs, (3) reaps, (4) binds sheaves, (5) threshes, (6) winnows, (7) selects [fit from unfit produce or crops], (8) grinds, (9) sifts, (10) kneads, (11) bakes; (12) he who shears wool, (13) washes it, (14) beats it, (15) dyes it; (16) spins, (17) weaves, (18) makes two loops, (19) weaves two threads, (20) separates two threads, (21) ties, (22) unties, (23) sews two stitches, (24) tears in order to sew two stitches; (25) he who traps a deer, (26) slaughters it, (27) flays it, (28) salts it, (29) cures its hide, (30) scrapes it, and (31) cuts it up; (32) he who writes two letters, (33) erases two letters in order to write two letters; (34) he who builds, (35) tears down; (36) he who puts out a fire, (37) kindles a fire; (38) he who hits with a hammer; (39) he who transports an object from one domain to another—lo, these are the forty generative acts of labor less one."<sup>28</sup>

Another list, reflecting prohibited activities from the broad Second Temple period, is seen in m.*Beitzah* 5:2:

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<sup>23</sup> "Said R. Judah said Samuel, 'Once a week, on Friday night.' 'Who brings forth its fruit in its season' (Psa. 1:3) – said R. Judah, and some say R. Huna, and some say R. Nahman, 'This refers to one who has sexual relations every Friday night'" (b.*Ketuvot* 62b; *Ibid.*).

<sup>24</sup> "He who went forth [beyond the Sabbath line] on a permissible mission, but they said to him, 'The deed already has been done,' has two thousand cubits in every direction [in which to walk about]" (m.*Eruvim* 4:3; Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah: A New Translation* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988], 214).

<sup>25</sup> "He who was in the east and said to his son, 'Prepare an *erub* for me in the west,' in the west and said to his son, 'Prepare an *erub* for me in the east,' if the distance between him and his house is two thousand cubits, and between him and his *erub* is more than this distance, he is permitted to go to his house and prohibited from going to his *erub*" (m.*Eruvim* 5:7; *Ibid.*, pp 217-218).

<sup>26</sup> "[If he said], 'My place of residence for the Sabbath is at its root,' he may then go from the place at which he is standing to the root, for a distance of two thousand cubits, and from the location of its root up to his house, for two thousand cubits. So he turns out to have the right to go four thousand cubits after it gets dark: [With regard to the rule that if he specified a particular spot of four cubits, he acquires it as his Sabbath locus and may walk to that place and another two thousand cubits beyond it to his home (Slotki),] said *Raba*, 'And that is the rule only if by running toward the root he can get there before it got dark and the Sabbath began'" (b.*Eruvim* 51a; *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*).

<sup>27</sup> Neusner, *Mishnah*, 278.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 187-188; further discussed in George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (New York: Pocket Books, 2000), pp 81-84.