



# Yeshua our Sabbath Rest

## Trusting God for the Work of Salvation



*“I have been crucified with the Messiah. It is no longer I who live, but the Messiah who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the Torah, then the Messiah died for no purpose.” Gal. 2:20-21)*



**RECENTLY SOMEONE WROTE** me to ask if it would be “kosher” if they took a vacation on the Sabbath day. This person was planning on a camping trip and wondered if hiking around and lighting a campfire would be prohibited in this case....

In response let me summarize a few things that I’ve written elsewhere on this site. First, we need to remember that the Sabbath day (and therefore the sanctification of time itself) is now under the authority of the Messiah (Matt. 12:8, 28:18, Rom. 14:5-6, Col. 2:16-17). In other words, to understand the meaning of the Sabbath, we must first of all look to Yeshua as our Teacher (John 13:13). For example, Yeshua said all of the following works were permitted – and even *recommended* - to be done on the Sabbath day:

1. Saving a life (Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9)
2. Healing others (Luke 6:1-10; Mark 3:1-5; John 5:9; 9:14; Luke 13:10-16)
3. Conducting *brit milah* (circumcision) (John 7:23)
4. Teaching (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:31; Acts 18:4)
5. Serving at the Temple (Matt. 12:5)
6. Rescuing an animal in distress (Matt. 12:11; Luke 14:1-6)
7. Showing acts of compassion (Matt. 12:1-4)
8. Caring for animals (Luke 13:15)
9. Carrying a bed (John 5:9-16)
10. Meeting the needs of others before fulfilling religious obligations (Mark 2:27-28)



Some people claim that Yeshua's "argument" with the "scribes and Pharisees" had to do with their adherence to the Oral Law (i.e., putting "a fence around the Torah"), and therefore Yeshua deliberately did things that contradicted their assumptions. While that may be true in *some cases* (e.g., ritual hand washing, associating with sinners, etc.), in other cases it's clear that much of what Yeshua taught agreed with the ethical teachings of the sages of His day (e.g. Hillel on neighbor love, Shammai on divorce, the centrality of the Shema, etc.), and therefore it's a mistake to say that he *categorically* rejected the traditions of the elders. After all, the moral truth of God is a constant, and all worthy ethical teachers end up saying much the same thing regarding personal and social ethics.

Notice, however, that while the sages put a "fence" around the Torah in deference to the authority of Moses, Yeshua consistently went *beyond* the authority of Moses himself (who spoke in the Name of YHVH [יהוה]) by saying things like: "You've heard that it was said to the ancients (Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις), **but I say** to you..." (Matt. 5:21-43). Who is this man to overrule the very words of the Ten Commandments? Similarly Yeshua regularly forgave people of their sins (Mark 2:5-7; Luke 7:48-50, Matt. 9:5-7), claimed to be the Judge of the World (Matt. 16:27, 25:31-46; John 5:22), and demanded to be honored as the God of Israel Himself (John 5:23). His was the voice of Authority coming from a new mountain (Matt. 7:29, 17:1-3; Mark 1:22).

Unlike the scribes and Pharisees of his day, Yeshua claimed *equal authority* with YHVH Himself (John 5:18, 5:23; 8:58, 10:30-33, 14:9; Mark 2:7, 13:26, Luke 5:21; Rev. 1:8, etc.). He was far more than a moral or religious teacher, of course, since He spoke as "the Voice of the Living God speaking from the midst of the fire..." (Deut. 5:26, Matt. 17:1-3). As the Word of God - the Voice of YHVH - Yeshua is "One with YHVH" (John 10:30; 14:9). Just as the Voice of YHVH *is* YHVH, so the Spirit of YHVH *is* YHVH: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Mark 13:31). His mission was not to reform Temple Judaism but *to die* for the sins of the world. Therefore we see him overthrowing the money changers tables at the Temple and literally stopping the Temple sacrifices from taking place (Mark 11:15-19). His body represented the true Temple of God (John 2:19). And regarding the sanctification of time, Yeshua stated He was the very "Lord of the Sabbath" (אֲדֹנָי הַשַּׁבָּת) – a title that could only be rightly applied to the LORD God of Israel Himself.

Recall that it was on the Sabbath that Yeshua said to the Pharisees, "My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am *working* (ἐργάζομαι - from the word ἔργον, "work")." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him; not only was He *breaking* the Sabbath (ἔλυνεν τὸ σάββατον), but He was even calling God His own Father, making himself *equal* with God" (John 5:17-18). Later, some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath (οὐκ ἔστιν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι τὸ σάββατον οὐ τηρεῖ)" (John 9:16).



On another occasion, the Pharisees attempted to rebuke Yeshua because He allowed his disciples to “pluck grain” on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-7). “Look! Your followers are violating the laws of Shabbat!” Yeshua responded to his legalistic critics by reminding them that: 1) King David entered into the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and ate “showbread” - despite the law’s clear prohibition of doing so, 2) the priests themselves were ordained by God *to work* on the Sabbath and yet were regarded as blameless, and [therefore] 3) since both King David and the priests acted this way, the Pharisees should have understood King Messiah’s purpose for doing so as well. Indeed, Yeshua pointed out that His mission as the Redeemer of Israel *transcended* even the laws of the Temple itself (Matt. 12:6). Yeshua is the “Righteous Branch” (*tzemach tzaddik*, צֶמַח צְדִיק), the great Davidic King who was promised to appear (Jer. 23:5-6). This “Righteous Branch” is also mentioned in Book of Zechariah as the one who would ultimately unite the authority of the priesthood with the Kingship of God on behalf of Israel’s redemption: “Behold, a man called the Branch (*tzemach*) shall branch out (יִצְמָח) from the midst of the earth, and he shall build the Temple of the LORD (וּבִנָּה אֶת־הַיְכָל יְהוָה)” [Zech. 6:12]. Likewise Yeshua is called Adonai Tzidkenu - the LORD our Righteousness, the Anointed One who would unite the roles of the King of Israel with that of Israel’s great High Priest.

In light of God’s redemptive work through the Messiah, therefore, the Scriptures command us to “consider Yeshua, [who] has been counted *worthy of more glory than Moses* – as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself” (Heb. 3:1-6). Yeshua alone is our great *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) of the better covenant (Heb. 8:6), and Yeshua alone is the Supreme Mediator between God and man. Only Yeshua brings God and man together.

## The Supremacy of the Messiah

Consider, then, how Yeshua the Messiah is greater than:

1. The first Jew, Abraham (John 8:53-58)
2. Israel and his children (John 4:12-14)
3. Moses the lawgiver (Heb. 3:1-6; Matt. 17:1-8; John 1:17; Acts 13:38-39, etc.)
4. All the angels of God (Matt. 13:41-42; Heb. 2)
5. The Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7; 13:10)
6. The Temple itself (Matt. 12:6, cp. Mark 11:16);
7. All the sacrifices offered at the Temple (Heb. 8-10)
8. King David, Israel’s first great king (Matt. 22:41-46)
9. Solomon, the greatest king of Israel (Luke 11:31)



10. Jonah, one of the greatest Jewish prophets (Matt. 12:41)
11. Elijah, one of the greatest Jewish prophets (Matt. 17:1-8)
12. The Sabbath (John 5:17-18; Matt. 12:8)

Indeed, Yeshua is called the very Creator Himself (Col. 1:16-19, John 1:1,14, Heb. 1:3, 3:3-4) who sits upon the throne of God Himself (Psalm 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8). He is both the Judge and the Savior of the world (Matt. 16:27, Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 John 4:14, Acts 4:12). As the Supreme Lawgiver Himself, “the Voice of the Living God speaking from the midst of the fire,” Yeshua is both the LORD of the Sabbath (אֲדֹנָי הַשַּׁבָּת) and the LORD of the Torah of Moses... He is the “Son of Man,” a Messianic Title that denotes the promised King of the World (Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 12:8, 16:27; Mark 8:38, 13:26; Luke 22:69, etc.). Simply put, Moses stands in relation to Yeshua as the creature stands before the Creator and is accountable to Him (Heb. 3:3; Matt. 17:1-3). The Name of Yeshua is the *only* name given for salvation (Isa. 45:21, Acts 4:12). *Every* knee shall bow to Him. Yeshua = YHVH (compare Isa. 45:21-23, Rom. 14:10-11, Phil. 2:9-11).



Jewish thinking regards the Sabbath primarily as a testimony that God alone is the Creator of the universe (celebrating His rule over creation, Gen. 2:2-3), and secondarily as a memorial of the redemption from Egypt (Deut. 5:15). The Sabbath is a day of blessing wherein a “double portion” of heavenly food is provided as a foretaste of *olam haba* (the world to come). In all of these aspects Yeshua shows Himself to be LORD. His miracles reveal His authority and rule over creation, His sacrificial death as the Lamb of God (שֶׁה הָאֱלֹהִים) redeems the whole world from slavery to sin (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21), He provides heavenly food as our Bread of Life (John 6:35), and His ministry on our behalf provides an everlasting rest from attempting to find acceptance before God through ritual acts of righteousness (Titus 3:5-6; Heb. 4:9-10; Eph. 2:8-10). In Yeshua we don’t work toward a place of victory, but rather work *from* it (1 Cor. 15:57).



## “Rightly Dividing” the Word of Truth

We are commanded to “rightly divide” (ὀρθοτομέω, lit. “cut straight”) the “word of truth” (דְּבַר הָאֱמֻנָה, see 2 Tim. 2:15). Therefore, in order to avoid confusion regarding the relationship between the words of Moses and the words of Yeshua, we must bear in mind that Torah (תּוֹרָה) is a general word that means “instruction” and always is a *function* of the underlying *covenant* (בְּרִית, “cut”) of which it is part. In other words, Torah is *our responsibility* to the covenantal actions of the LORD God of Israel. Followers of Yeshua are therefore not “anti-Torah” even if they understand this word in relation to the new and better covenant of God (Heb. 8:6). There is indeed a Torah of the New Covenant, just as there is Torah of the older one. Messianic believers are called to adhere to the instruction of King Yeshua who is the embodiment of all genuine truth from God (John 1:17). The all-important matter is to understand our response to God’s covenantal actions as mediated through God’s promised Messiah (1 John 5:11-12).

## Yeshua our Sabbath Rest

Since we are no longer bound by the terms of the Sinai Covenant (i.e., the *sefer ha-brit* that was sprinkled with the blood of bulls and ratified by the 70 elders of Israel), the role of the Torah itself has *necessarily* changed (Heb. 7:12). We are no more obligated to “keep the Sabbath” – *especially* as defined by Messiah-denying rabbis – than we are to stone our children who are disobedient or to execute homosexuals (both of which are commanded in the law of Moses: Deut. 21:18-22, Lev. 20:13). In this regard “Sabbath observance” is tied to the terms of a covenant that was “destined for obsolescence” (Heb. 8:13). Likewise we are no longer beholden to the Levitical priesthood (i.e., the ritual expression of the Sinai covenant), but we rather partake of the ministry of the *superior* priesthood of Yeshua, our great High Priest after the order of *Malki Tzedek* (Heb. 7:12, 13:10). Since we have a “better covenant based on better promises” (Heb. 8:6), we don’t offer sheep and goats upon altars in our services because we understand that this is no longer the way to come before the LORD. The law of Moses made “nothing perfect” but the ministry of Yeshua now allows us to truly draw near to God (Heb. 7:19). Though there was a “glory of the older covenant,” that glory was destined to *fade away* (καταργέω) in light of the greater glory of Jesus (2 Cor. 3:7). Yeshua’s sacrifice tore down the veil of the Holy of Holies itself, and now we are invited to come “boldly” before the Throne of Grace to find help for our lives (Heb. 4:16, Rom. 5:1-2). Note that the word translated “boldly” in this verse (παρρησία) means that we can speak freely to God from the center of our hearts – without fear or shame. The Divine Light is no longer concealed to those who trust in God, since this Light represents our salvation in Yeshua (John 8:12, 2 Cor. 3:7-18)!



The Apostle Paul states that we have “died” to the earlier contract made at Sinai and are now “married” to another, namely the Messiah who is the “LORD of the Sabbath” (Rom. 7:1-4, Matt. 28:18). Since we have a new covenant, we have a new understanding of Torah, namely, the *Torah of the Messiah* (תּוֹרַת הַמָּשִׁיחַ) (Gal. 6:2). The Torah of Messiah is now one of sacrificial love and *gemilut chasidim* (Rom. 13:8-10, Gal. 5:14). We fulfill the Torah’s inner intent by abiding in the love of God as given to us in the Messiah Yeshua (John 14:21-24). We are no longer slaves under Sinai but are free citizens of heavenly Jerusalem. Sarah, not Hagar, is our spiritual mother (Gal. 4:21-5:1). We have liberty in Messiah (Gal. 5:13). We are circumcised with an inward, heart circumcision (Col. 2:10-11). Those who trust in Yeshua are made spiritual Jews and are *partakers* of the covenantal blessings given to Israel (Rom. 2:29, Eph. 2:11-19). We are made *complete* in our relationship with the LORD (Eph. 1:3). The rest Yeshua gives (מְנוּחָה יְשׁוּעָה) is true spiritual release...

Adultery is a form of *promiscuity* that violates covenantal responsibility. Those who denigrate the covenant of the Messiah by claiming that *something else* must be added to His sacrificial work are called *spiritual adulterers* (see Rom. 7:1-4). Trying to mingle the covenants of Sinai and Zion leads to confusion and to potential destruction (Gal. 1:6-9; 2:4-5; 2:21; 3:3,10, etc.). New wine cannot be put into old wineskins (Mark 2:22).

We are called to walk in the Spirit of Truth (רוּחַ הָאֱמֶת) and to worship the LORD God of Israel (John 4:23-24). We are to honor the Son *as* we honor the Father (John 5:23). If we love Him and genuinely desire to please Him, we will fulfill the *inward intent* of the Torah in our daily lives (Jer. 31:31-33). All of the moral law of the Torah is restated in the New Testament – but *even more radically*. We ask the Holy Spirit for help in discerning the truth on a personal, moment-by-moment basis. We trust in God’s guidance and help as He promised in the terms of the New Covenant. Freedom doesn’t mean we’re “free to do whatever we want,” but rather we’re “free to love God without fear...” We are now heirs of God, no longer slaves (John 15:15, Rom. 8:17). Yeshua came to elevate our lives and bring us safely to the Father as redeemed children (Eph. 5:1).

The Apostle Paul also wrote: Οὐκ ἄθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν / “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the Torah then the Messiah died for no purpose” (Gal. 2:21). Note that the word translated “nullify” (ἄθετῶ) means to “transgress” or to “set aside as *ineffective*.” Ironically enough, those who advocate for “Sabbath observance” (at least in the legalistic sense) are obliquely setting the grace of God aside as ineffective. The writer of the Book of Hebrews warns, “Anyone who has *set aside* (ἄθετῶ - same word) the Torah of Moses died without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and



has outraged the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:28-29). If nullifying the Torah warrants death, then nullifying the redemptive work of salvation warrants even greater retribution. We can’t have it both ways: you must choose whether your savior is Moses or Yeshua....

## Coming full circle...

Does that mean we disregard the Torah, then, and ignore what it teaches? *By no means.* We cannot even begin to understand the idea of the New Covenant (בְּרִית הַדָּשָׁה) or even the nature of salvation itself (יְשׁוּעָה) apart from thoroughly understanding the law of Moses (תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה). (Psalm 1:1-2, 19:7, 119:97, etc.) Yeshua Himself said that Moses and the prophets wrote of Him (John 5:46, Luke 24:27), and the Apostle Paul stated that faith in the Messiah upholds the “lawful” use of the law (1 Tim. 1:8, Gal. 3:19-24, Rom. 3:27-28, etc.). This is the “law of faith” (תּוֹרַת הָאֱמוּנָה) that precedes and underlies all that was given at Sinai to the Jewish people. It is the “deeper Torah” that Abraham and the prophets understood. As Paul wrote, “Does it follow that we *abolish* (καταργέω, “make useless”) Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we establish (□στημι, “make stand”) the truth of the Torah” (Rom. 3:31).

Just as there is a deeper sense of Torah that Paul appealed to make his case that he was not teaching “against the law” (e.g., Gal. 3:16-18), so there is a deeper sense of rest (שָׁבַת) that God promised those who are *trusting in Him* (מְנוּחָה שָׁבַת, Heb. 4:9). This rest comes from trusting in the finished work of Yeshua as our Torah righteousness before the Father. The *principle* of Sabbath is valid, just as the principle of adhering to faithful love is (i.e., the *positive* expression of the commandment not to commit adultery). The statement that “there is a *rest* for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9-10) does not refer to ritualistic “Sabbath-keeping,” however, since the context clearly states that “whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.” This is a “*tetelestai*” revelation – a moment when you apprehend that God has fulfilled the Torah’s demand on your behalf through the gift of Yeshua’s life and sacrifice (2 Cor. 5:21). Accepting the “death benefits” of the Messiah makes you an heir to the Kingdom of Heaven (Gal. 4:4-7). You are no longer “married” to the former arrangement of being in union with God; there is a better cup and a better ketubah (Rom. 7:1-4).

We are invited to enter into this “greater rest” by exercising faith in God’s promises (Heb. 4:1-3). Again, this is the “law of faith” (תּוֹרַת הָאֱמוּנָה) that precedes and underlies all that was given at Sinai to the Jewish people. “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts through unbelief.”



Yes, there remains a Sabbath for the people of God (Heb. 4:9), a greater “rest” from attempting to please God based on our own merits (Heb. 4:10, Titus 3:5-6). We do not labor to find favor with God through acts of our own personal merit, but rather we trust in the acceptance and love of God given to us in Yeshua. Paradoxically we “labor” to enter into this rest by exercising genuine *faith* in God’s salvation in His Son (Heb 4:11, Phil. 2:11-12). As Yeshua taught, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the One whom the Father has sent” (John 6:28-29).

In all things Yeshua receives the preeminence, friends, including the glory of our personal and corporate salvation. We do not merit salvation; it is the gift of God (Col. 1:18, Eph. 2:10-11).

לִיהוָה הַיְשׁוּעָה עַל־עַמֶּךָ בִּרְכָתְךָ סֵלָה

“Salvation belongs to the LORD;  
your blessing be on your people! Selah.”

Psalm 3:8