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SHALL WE GATHER?

by Susan Hardin

Is there any topic that has been more hotly contested throughout the scriptures, or the centuries, and that still continues to be a bone of contention among Believers today, then the topic of keeping the Sabbath? As a people drawn back to Torah, we know that observing YHVH's holy appointed Sabbaths are central to our restoration and obedience. Even though learning to direct our lives around the appointments on YHVH's calendar is challenging in our society, every step we take to honor the Sabbath is followed by favor and blessing from the LORD.

It has been nearly three decades since my husband, David, and I made the spiritual decision to adjust our lives so that we could start keeping the Sabbath according to the scriptures. However, the way we observe it today is much different than how we first began and it is constantly changing for the better, and growing in the abundance of the LORD, because over the years YHVH has revealed layer after layer of new understanding for what He calls "holy."

In a recent Torah study, YHVH brought two more aspects of observing and keeping His Sabbath to my attention. One involves our spiritual, mental, and emotional attitude toward the keeping of the Sabbath, and the other highlights one key word, that will be discussed later in this article, that seemingly ties all of God's instructions for Sabbath observance to one common theme.

Let's begin with Exodus 31:12-17 (NKJV).

"12 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 13 'Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: "Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. 14 You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any

work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15 Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. 16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. 17 It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.””

YHVH is very direct in these passages. Our heart's desire should be dedicated to the keeping of whatever YHVH has established in His Word, even without the looming consequence of being cut off from among his people or put to death, as stated in verse 14. As severe and compelling as it sounds, that should not be our motivation.

Observing YHVH's Sabbaths requires genuine love for the things of God and a heart of humble obedience. We need diligent forethought and willingness to commit to the time management skills and sacrifice necessary to organize and prepare for the Sabbath in the same way that we freely check our calendars, commit in advance, rearrange schedules, devise elaborate plans, and pack up needed items; then deliberately rise early, filled with eagerness and excitement, to indulge in a personal or family vacation.

If our obedience to Sabbath is truly the abundant joy and time set apart from work that a vacation is, then the love offering we bring to the sanctuary at His appointed times will be beautiful rather than burdensome and the return on our offering will be 100% blessing.

Isaiah 58:13-14 tells us that we are to call the Sabbath a "delight," to honor it, and the LORD, and we will also "delight" ourselves, in the LORD. In the Hebrew, "delight" is a primary root that means to be *soft*, *pliable*, or *luxurious*. If we delight in the LORD, coming into His presence, on His Sabbath, we are free to lean into the LORD, and as He receives us, He provides a soft place for us to fall. It should be a luxurious experience that stimulates great pleasure for the senses, in a time and place of peace and rest. According to the Hebrew context, if we call the Sabbath "a delight," we are calling it a luxury, something enjoyable, that is relatively costly, that provides an abundance of rich comforts. With this understanding of the Sabbath, we cast it into an air of indulgence. An exclusive time, that we would anticipate and treasure, by giving it high value, as a rare and unique treat.

Maybe you are thinking, "Well, it's not that rare." Yes, we do get one every seven days, but right there is part of the beauty and blessing of His Sabbaths. YHVH has created numerous days in our yearly cycle that are holy, all the rest are just ordinary. He has set these days apart from the rest of our mundane,

work-filled, battle-weary days, and given His people appointed times to come into His sanctuary, a place of shelter from the storm and refuge from the attacks of the enemy, to have a time of luxurious opulence, that is a time of great riches and profuse abundance, in His presence. As it says in Psalm 16:11 (NKJV): “In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”



This is why the command in Isaiah 58 instructs us to “not seek our own pleasure” on the Sabbath. Not because we are being deprived of some joy, but because the pleasures the LORD wishes to pour out on us, at His appointed times, are so much more than we could ever hope to accomplish trying to please ourselves. That scripture goes on to say that by honoring the Sabbath we “delight ourselves in the LORD.” What a promise we are given in Psalm 37:4 (NKJV), which says: “Delight yourself...in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” It sounds like a blessing we would want to indulge in every day, yet, we sometimes treat it as a burden of obligation, reducing it to a regimented routine we have incorporated into our schedule, as we merely go through the motions of observing the Sabbath.

SELFISH HEART OR SERVANT’S HEART?

How did we get sidetracked into seeing God’s blessing as a burden? It has to do with the spirit of rebellion in our fleshly nature. We serve a God of order. His kingdom is one of control not confusion. Every good thing He gives us has a boundary that keeps it under His divine control and order. Our fleshly nature resists those boundaries and the distinct lines of divine order that YHVH has created. Our flesh wants total control. And our flesh, if given that freedom, only produces for us the chaotic consequences of sin.

For example, YHVH has given us animals for our consumption, but He has also determined which ones are clean and appropriate as food. If we choose to eat that which is unclean, our rebellion to that boundary turns God’s blessing to a curse, as ‘we’ expose our health and well-being to sickness and disease. He has given the fruit of the vine for our joy, however, abuse of that gift brings on the sin of drunkenness and if habitual, the effects of alcoholism. YHVH has designed

our bodies to experience love and sexual pleasure, but the boundary He has placed on that is within His covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. Every other form of sexual gratification outside of that covenant is lustful sin, abominations that the Word defines in such terms as fornication, homosexuality, incest, adultery, and the like. When we operate, in the flesh, crossing over the lines of YHVH's holy established boundaries, we are guilty of defiling and profaning that which He has created for good.

So, how does this apply to these delightfully luxurious days He has created as Holy Sabbaths? In Exodus 31:13 we read, "Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep." The word "Sabbaths" here means, an *intermission*. Yeshua declared that the Sabbath was made for man. God has created a space in time, an intermission, a holy, restful vacation, in which we are to stop the flow and focus of our normal routine and put our focus on the Holy One of Israel. Only the LORD can make a day holy and only the LORD can establish the boundary which distinguishes that holiness.

For most of us, prior to becoming Believers, our focus was worldly and selfish. We had a mentality of self-preservation and self-satisfaction that drove us to get what we wanted, when we wanted it, in amounts that fostered a near hoarding complex to satisfy all of our fleshly lust and desire. When we became Believers in Yeshua, we were called to put YHVH in control. Supposedly, we moved over and gave Him the driver's seat. Unfortunately, we often try to grab the wheel! If we truly surrender 'all' to Him, we can travel the road of life content to be in the passenger seat, secure in knowing that He will provide abundance and blessing for the journey.

When YHVH brought Israel out of Egypt, He was in the driver's seat and He began to shift their focus from self to trusting in Him. We are well aware of how they murmured, complained and let the flesh rule their responses to His leading, His commands, and His foundational boundaries. One example of the divine order He established is recorded in Exodus 16. This passage reveals a key word for keeping and observing the Sabbath that appears to be connected to every other boundary that the LORD has set in place, regarding all of His Sabbaths. It has to do with "gathering."

Exodus 16: 4-5 (NKJV), "4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. 5 And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."

YHVH draws the line for a basic Sabbath principle with those two verses. He

separates the holy from the ordinary with the concept of “gathering,” a term He used twice, in that instruction. YHVH is simply saying...I will provide, but you will have to do your part, which is “gathering.” However, you have to “gather” according to My time schedule: Six days you will “gather for yourselves,” but on the seventh day you will not “gather for yourself.” You can trust me to provide an abundance on day six, but you must be obedient to prepare by gathering a double portion so that you can rest from “your gathering” on My Holy Sabbath. And by the way, this is a test, to see if you will walk in My law or not.

Nothing has changed. This principle of “gathering for ourselves,” is at the heart of every boundary YHVH has set for us, regarding His Sabbaths, and how we conduct ourselves on those set apart days, is still a test as to whether we will walk in His Torah or not. This line of boundary, in regard to the “action of gathering,” appears to be a key concept that YHVH has woven through all of His commands regarding keeping of the Sabbath. His divine order places that line on the ordinary days, making them the time for “our gathering” to be accomplished, while the days established as Holy Sabbaths are set apart for YHVH to do “His gathering,” of His people, to Himself.

By looking at the various Hebrew and Greek meanings of the word “gather,” this divine order becomes clear. In the Scriptures, the word “gather” stems from several primary roots, all pointing to the parameters YHVH has established as boundaries for His Sabbaths. Thus, we can easily understand why He has put a divine order over the “act of gathering,” when we consider how those many definitions come into play, while just shopping for our daily essentials. It is an endless task to keep a family’s food and clothing needs well stocked, let alone the more complicated acquisitions that are required, like the purchase of automobiles and homes. Any form of “gathering” for ourselves involves “servile work,” which as quoted earlier in Exodus 31:14-15, is clearly forbidden on the Sabbath.

GATHERING, FORAGING FOR OURSELVES

The first meaning for “gather” in the Hebrew is; *to forage* (Strong’s H#7197.) Directing our attention to what is available for purchase is step one. We are foraging when we look with intent at various advertisements or go straight to the store to browse through the products on the shelves. That is what makes shopping labor intensive, and may result in a foraging frenzy through every aisle of one or more big box warehouse stores, scanning choices until we have determined what selections are appealing.

Next we have the physical application of our hand to the product fulfilling

these additional Hebrew and Greek definitions of “gathering,” from *Strong’s*, which are: to grasp H#6908, to clip off (as in gathering grapes H#1219,) to remove G#622, to glean or to pick up H#3950, and to enfold or to collect H#3664. After lugging our choices to the checkout, we engage in the exchange of cash, deletion of funds by debit, or agree to a contract of credit. At this point, we have completed the buying transaction. Continuing on, we “gather for ourselves” by proceeding with the next three definitions for gathering, which are: to receive, to take away, and to put up. (All three meanings are from *Strong’s* G#622.) We now “receive” what we needed or desired and there is nothing left to do but “take it away” to our home and “put it up” in storage.

Even if we are computer savvy enough to do all of our shopping online, sitting on the couch, snuggled in our pajamas with refreshment in hand, the task of foraging through site after site, clicking on “show details” to glean the accuracy of each product, wondering if the size dimensions will work, and if the color shown is suitable, then making a decision to grasp and collect by pushing the “add to cart” button, followed by typing in all our information for purchase and checking it twice, all the while praying that our account is not hacked and our identity stolen, as we wait for the delivery to occur so that we may receive our goods. We then continue the gathering process by clipping off and removing the packaging so we can enfold it into our arms, and finally put it up in storage. Regardless of the shopping strategy, it is still mundane and mentally exhaustive. Laborious tasks best reserved for the “work of gathering” relegated to the six ordinary days, as per the holy commands of YHVH.

No wonder we are prohibited from buying or selling on His Sabbath. It is not just the transfer of money from hand to hand, but the whole process of focusing attention on the looking, desiring, and grasping of things that actually makes buying more cumbersome than the act of selling. Selling, of course, is discouraged because it involves focus on building treasures for ourselves by receiving a profit or at the very least, gaining back, what has been invested, by breaking even. It is the type of “gathering” that YHVH gives us six days to complete.

The remainder of the Hebrew definitions for “gathering” appears to describe the act of gathering that YHVH has set apart for Himself on His Holy Sabbaths. Those definitions in *Strong’s* include: to convoke H#6950 (as in a Holy convocation,) and to assemble H#7197. He has set a time, on His appointed days, to meet with His people, Israel. He is extending His hand in the “action of gathering,” to grasp His hold on us, as He enfolds us into His arms. He is

receiving and collecting us into His presence. His mighty hand clipping us off of the twisted vines of the world, in clusters of congregations of Israel, scattered throughout the Earth, removing us for a time of worship and praise to Him, commanding that we do not forsake the fellow-shipping of the body together.



Three more Hebrew meanings (*Strong's* H#1219) for "gathering" that apply specifically to what YHVH is doing on His Holy Sabbath are: to save (as by flight,) and to be isolated, or inaccessible (as by height or strong fortification.) Clearly, those definitions of "gathering" speak to the Sabbath concept of being "holy," as in separated from the world and guarded from the ordinary drudgeries of life, for one sacred, set apart day. Something we should probably rush into, by flight, as the word defined, to be freed, delivered, and saved from the worldly, resting isolated and inaccessible (with our personal electronics turned off, disabling the distractions of the "prince of the air") in His Holy sanctuary.

Why does YHVH desire that only "His gathering" be done on the Sabbaths? These last two definitions from *Strong's* for the word "gathering" answer that question. They are: to strengthen (H#5756) and to restore (G#622). Strengthening our earthly vessels and restoring what has been used up throughout the first six days of the week. This is the infilling that YHVH is doing when He gathers us to Himself on His Holy Sabbaths.

With the varied definitions of "gather" in the Hebrew and Greek, we see that the order and boundary YHVH has declared for His Sabbaths, require that we separate the Holy from the ordinary, so we can engage in that abundant joy every week as we cycle through His year. The Sabbath is His witness to us. As stated in Exodus 31:17 (NKJV): "It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

Yeshua is the manifest "witness" of the Word and LORD of the Sabbath. He made the boundary of separation between the Holy Sabbaths and all other ordinary work days, when He spoke these words from Mount Sinai: "Six days

you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.” (Exodus 20:9)

This particular Hebrew word for “work” refers to anything you do or make that involves a transaction or activity, related to any products or property, as in the process of buying or selling, or in the producing of goods, skills, and services for the task of earning a living which would clearly involve all aspects of the “action of gathering for ourselves” as well.

The word “labor” also, refers to work, in any sense, that is the action of gathering and it comes from a primary root that extends the definition of “labor” to the act of enslavement. Operating as a slave on the Sabbath, by working or engaging in our regular labor connects right back to the concept of being bound in Egypt. Deuteronomy 5:15 (NKJV): “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

There was no day of rest in Egypt. Every day, was a day of work. When we do our regular work on the Sabbath, when we continue our gathering, as the word is defined in both the Greek and Hebrew, when we forage, glean, clip off, grasp, collect, enfold, receive, remove, and put up, resources for ourselves, on His Holy Sabbaths then we are not in that soft, pliable, luxurious place called Sabbath, that YHVH made for man to be strengthened and restored. Instead, we are lingering in Egypt, serving under the bondage of Pharaoh, rather than enjoying the rest and freedom of being bondservants for Christ, whom we serve, under grace and in the liberty of His Torah.

No matter how much we love our jobs, and no matter how faithfully we do them, as unto YHVH, it is still a burdensome work of gathering, instituted at the fall of Adam, in Gen. 3:17-19 (NKJV):

17 “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it, All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground.”

The six days we spend devoted to working at jobs, running errands, involvement in activities, and all the other gathering we do, to participate and survive in this society, certainly requires a physical and spiritual need for rest, rejuvenation, and revival, on every Holy Sabbath, as God has directed, or we may find ourselves “returning to the ground” a lot sooner, than we anticipated.

LOADS AND LOADS OF OVERLOAD!

The striving, driving pace of work in our society is certainly burdensome, and remains almost identical to the scene that brought stern warning in Nehemiah 13: 15-17 (NKJV): “15 In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions. 16 Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. 17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, “What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day?”

Here again, we see this concept of “gathering.” People engaged in foraging, gleaning, clipping and removing, product and property, then collecting and enfolding it into burdens of goods, to be sold for more gathering unto self, through the grasping of additional riches, and all an honest day’s work, if done on the six ordinary days of the week, but an act of profaning if done on the Sabbath.

The word “burden” in that passage from Nehemiah refers to something physical, but in the Hebrew it has a spiritual application as well; it refers to an utterance, a doom, or a mental desire. It is important that we not carry a mental or emotional burden on the Sabbath. We can make a decision to enter the Sabbath with joy, anticipating a day of rest and peace while making every effort to refrain from gathering thoughts that normally burden our mind with past betrayal, hurt, anguish, grief, and sorrow. There is likely enough of that thinking going on to make our heads self-implode on the six ordinary days of the week. Sabbath is a day to take words of destruction, calamity, suffering, or unhappiness, all the things that burden us mentally, and free them from our grasp. For if we lay our burden down, the LORD will be faithful take it up. Hallelujah!

Jeremiah 17:20-24 (NKJV) “21 Thus says the Lord: ‘Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; 22 nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. 23 But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.’”

When we enter into His Sabbath, we first need to make sure that we have cast all of our cares and burdens on Him (Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7).

BEING WATCHFUL OF OUR WITNESS

The actions of the early Israelites boldly profaned the Sabbath. However, this begs the question as to what level of dedication we are committed when it comes to keeping the Sabbath in our generation. To take our heart of obedience a step further, 1Thessalonians 5:22 (KJV) commands that we even “abstain from all appearance of evil.” When we call ourselves Believers, the whole world is watching, curious to see if we will behave, in the same way as we say we believe. For example, recently, my husband and I uploaded some photos online to be developed at a major retailer. We were supposed to be able to pick them up the next day, but their machine broke down, so our order was sent to another store, and the pick-up date was moved back to Saturday, a Sabbath. The store where the order was finally filled was quite a distance from our house, but it was conveniently located between church and home. Using logical reasoning, since you pay for the pictures at the time of the order, technically, we would not be buying or selling if we stopped to pick up the pictures on the way home from church. We would also be good stewards to not waste gas by making another trip to that location, after the sun went down at the close of the Sabbath.

Do you see how easily we can analyze things to accommodate our self-satisfying notions?

But what if, someone from the congregation saw us turning into that store parking lot? It would be a natural assumption to think that we were intending to do some shopping. As people in leadership positions, we are held to a higher standard. We are called to set the example for the flock. If that someone harbored even the misled thought that we had a casual dis-regard for buying and selling on the Sabbath, our example for walking in Torah would become a worthless testimony. What if, we ran into someone from a Sunday church that had heard us share about the restoration of Hebraic roots and the keeping the LORD’s Holy Sabbath, as we came out of that store carrying our bag of pictures? It would be possible for them to think, “*Didn’t these people tell us they don’t buy and sell on Saturday?*” Would gratification of such a small thing as picking up some photos be worth causing damage to our witness and representation of Yeshua?

Our understanding of the word “gathering” led us to go on home and get the photos later. Had we gone in to get the pictures at that time, we would have been “gathering to ourselves” on the Sabbath. We would have completed the transaction of receiving what we had foraged. We would have grasped it, removed it, and walked out carrying a burden of goods, to take away and store up with all of our other little treasures. LORD, help us! Let it not be said, that

we, who call ourselves Israel today, “turned a deaf ear, made our neck stiff, or refused to receive instruction.”

Now let’s look at another Sabbath command involving the “action of gathering” that also has both a physical and spiritual application. It is from Exodus 35:3 (NKJV): “You shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day.” We know that currently, some of our Jewish

brethren will not flip a light switch, turn a knob on a stove, or even start their car on the Sabbath to keep from kindling a spark of electricity or igniting a flame, but a scriptural example in Numbers 15, shows us that “kindling a fire” is not necessarily about the moment of ignition, but once again, about the “act of gathering for ourselves” that YHVH has reserved for the six ordinary days of the week. This passage also gives a literal example of what YHVH stated in Exodus 31, when He said that profaning the Sabbath would result in being cut off from His people and a consequence of death.

Numbers 15:32-36 (NKJV), “32 Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. 33 And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. 34 They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. 35 Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.’ 36 So, as the Lord commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.”

Did you notice it was the “act of gathering” that labeled him guilty? He was confronted before he even had the chance to light a fire, or do anything else with those sticks. It is the “act of gathering for ourselves” that we are to avoid in every manner of that word on the Sabbath day.

Now having read that, we may wonder, if we fail in this area will we be cut off from the congregation or put to death as reported in Numbers 15? Certainly, we have all profaned the Sabbath in one way or another over the years and we are still breathing, Praise Yah, and receiving yet more instruction regarding the Holiness of His Sabbaths. Perhaps our pardon is another extension of His grace as He continues to bring about the restoration of all things. Or perhaps the idea



of being cut off and certain death is something we bring on ourselves spiritually, as a result of profaning the Sabbath.

If you think about it, when we make a choice to stay home or be elsewhere, outside of Yah's "gathering" of His people on His Holy convocations, we have already cut ourselves off from the congregation. We suffer the loss of fellowship and miss the opportunity to be encouraged and enlightened by praise, worship, and the bread of the Word, thus, we continue malnourished and weak in our sickness and disease, because we have no elders to anoint us with oil, lay hands on us, or cover us in prayer for healing, as directed in the book of James chapter 5. If we make this a habit, we become sheep without a flock or shepherd, isolated and alone, easy prey for the ever lurking predator who comes only to steal, kill, and destroy any commitment we have made to YHVH.

If we are not only absent, but continue to work, labor, and gather for ourselves, choosing bondage and slavery over entering in to that luxurious resting place in YHVH's presence on the Sabbath, a day set aside to saturate in His Holy anointing, our sensitivity to the Ruach will become so weak and weary, that we will die a slow spiritual death, suffering from a lingering dryness brought on by too many days without living water.

FUELING THE FIRE

Obviously the man profaning the Sabbath in Numbers 15 was not planning and preparing for the Sabbath by making it the central focus of his weekly cycle. Our mindset for true Torah living should be measured from Sabbath to Sabbath, New Moon to New Moon, with the joy of our yearly rotation being the celebration of each Holy Feast, as we revolve from one to the next in the circle of YHVH's appointed lifestyle.

If we learn to gather for our needs and do the work of preparation ahead of time on ordinary days, just as the Israelites were instructed to do, and if we walk always looking forward to our next appointment with YHVH, with the anticipation of seeking a powerful touch of the Ruach, we will become the kindling that He gathers into His presence on the Sabbath to be consumed in His supernatural fire. On the other hand, if we choose to just behave as members of the "grace-filled dead," merely dragging into church, with our dry bones propped up in pews seeking no more than to qualify for another sticker on our obedience chart, we will miss that glorious anointing of strength and restoration He has come to provide.

"Kindle," in the Hebrew, also means to become brutish. If we become brutish by collecting feelings in our minds of anger, irritation, or frustration, gathering

kindling so to speak, in our emotions, and then we continue to fuel that fire by igniting into quarrels or controversies with others on the Sabbath, we are profaning the day by drawing attention to ourselves. Kindling brutish behavior is a selfish burning that disrupts the rest, peace, and delight we are to be experiencing during the holy appointed time set apart for entering into the intimate fire of the Holy Spirit.



Recognizing the boundaries that YHVH has set regarding the keeping of His Sabbath is as simple as understanding the concept of “gathering” in every sense of that word in the Hebrew and Greek, and being diligent in spirit to do all our personal gathering on the six common days and allowing YHVH to gather us to Himself on each of His Holy Sabbaths. As YHVH declared, “it is a test.” Every choice we make in this life has a direct effect on our role in the Millennial Kingdom and all eternity. We have the potential to be a kingdom of priests, but as the scripture says, each man will be judged by His own doings.

Now what if one of our current “doings” involves going to our job on the Sabbath? We know that people who work in emergency services; healing, helping, rescuing, or saving lives, often have work rotations that fall on a Sabbath. In Matthew 12:12, Yeshua plainly demonstrated that it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath, as He restored a man to wholeness. Some of us may not have that kind of employment, and at the moment, may have no choice as to whether we work on the Sabbath or not.

However, if the desire of our heart is to honor the Sabbath, nothing is too hard for YHVH, for He is the One that “opens and shuts.” If we ask, and He opens the door for us to have the Sabbath off from our job, then we need to be faithful to walk through that door, even if the change means less benefit. YHVH can do more with less than we can with more, and it might just be a test to see if we will take the opportunity to walk in His law—or not.

As situations arise, we are always left to exercise our free will just as those who were faced with a choice after the idolatry of the golden calf. Today we must answer that same call as those who danced around that cow so long ago. In Exodus 32:26 Moses posed the question: “*Who is on the LORD’S side? Let him come unto me.*”

What did the sons of Levi do? They “gathered” themselves together unto Moses, an “act of gathering” that the LORD anointed with the establishment of the priesthood.

Israel’s lure to the golden calf appears to be a cakewalk compared to the horde of seductive idolatry we are bombarded with in the world today. Will we choose to set ourselves apart from those carnal things now, so that we may serve as Levites or priests in the kingdom to come? Will we yield ourselves to “YHVH’s gathering” on His Holy Sabbaths so that we may be rested, refreshed, strengthened, and restored in His weekly revival? Sabbath is an event specifically designed to prepare us to be a bold, worthy, witness of Him, as we go about doing our mundane gathering, shoulder to shoulder with the lost souls of the world, on the six ordinary or common days of the week.

If we genuinely display abundant joy for the Sabbath, we demonstrate to the world that His Torah is not bondage, but liberty! Not heaviness, but a yoke that is light! Not a list of “Don’ts” to be rebelled against, but a list of “Do’s” that we can savor multiple times throughout the year, all the while waiting expectantly for the fulfillment of His promises. Glorious promises, that He declares in Isaiah 56:5-8 for those who keep His Sabbaths, even to eunuchs and foreigners who were once excluded, He promises to give “a name better than that of sons and daughters.” And to “everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer.” We can endure to the end knowing that He will not fail to “gather” the outcasts of Israel!

Until then, may the prayer of our hearts be this:

“Holy Abba, as you forage through all the peoples of this world, may we be the ones set apart, the ones that you grasp in your mighty hand. May we be the remnant gleaned that you clip off and remove as Your final selection, collected to be among Your peculiar treasures. May we be the ones You enfold and put up, isolated, inside the narrow gates of your fortified city, the New Jerusalem. May we be those whom You receive as priests in Your Kingdom at the coming of your Millennial Reign. May we be those who enter into Your Sabbath of rest, as Your will is manifest on earth, as it is in Heaven. May we be those who are diligent, to seek with delight, Your Sabbaths, and bask in the joy of Your presence now, so that we can continue in Your Shabbat, for all eternity. Amen, Amen.”

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Susan Hardin is a retired public educator and a member of the House of Israel Fellowship in Las Vegas, Nevada. She serves her church on the leadership team as an elder with her husband David, and is a frequent pulpit teacher to that congregation. Her Pastor is Wally Smith, who is an ARI Shepherd.

THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

by Batya Wootten

We want to offer a word of encouragement to those who do not have a wonderful congregation with which they can gather. Whether you have only a few with whom you can meet, or even if you are alone, we offer the following quote from the book, *Redeemed Israel—Reunited and Restored*:

The Holy One said of last days Israel, “I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face” (Ezekiel 20:35).

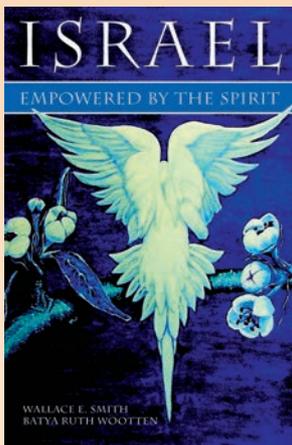
Israel was to be *allured* into a wilderness of the peoples so YHVH could plead with them face to face. Today, many feel they have been drawn into a desert. They feel lost, alone, alienated. Yet, Israel is brought to this place for a reason. *Soncino Books of the Bible* says, “As in the wilderness of Egypt they were constituted the people of God, so in this desert, cut off from intercourse with heathen nations, they will be made again into His people. There, God will plead with them face to face with none to distract their attention from Him” (Footnote, Ezekiel 20:35, p 129).

In Hebrew, the word for wilderness is *midbar*. It comes from the root word *dbr*, meaning *word*. In the *wilderness* Israel’s heart is prepared to truly hear the *word* of YHVH Elohim. In the wilderness, formerly wayward ones are brought to a place of isolation with the One to whom they are to one day be wed. In the desert, they learn of His love for them as individuals. They learn faithfulness, and they learn to call the One that they once called “Master,” their “Husband.” In this place of closing off, they become devoted to Him alone. They have eyes for no other. The fear of men is removed from before their face. They are driven with desire to be with their Beloved King, and thus they become “Betrothed Virgin Israel.” (End Quote.)

The wilderness can be both a difficult and inspiring place. In it, we can learn about being truly committed. We can even learn to sing a old song, “*Though none go with me, still I will follow...*”

Sometimes, we suffer rejection and need to be isolated—so we can learn to be truly committed to the Scriptural truths the Holy One has taught us. Sometimes, Abba just needs to get us alone, *so He can deal with us—face to face*.

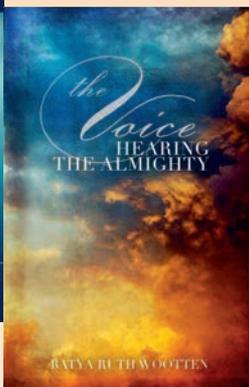
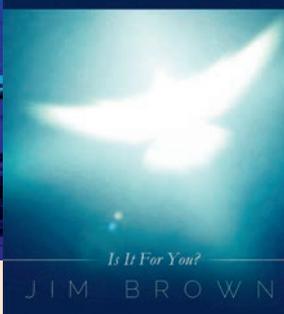
Whatever the reason for the season, let us all seek to be like our Messiah. When He came out of the wilderness, He did so “*In the power of the Spirit...*” (John 4:14). *May the same be true of each one of us. Let us seek to be empowered!*



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