

How to Keep Shabbat Set-Apart

How do we keep Shabbat set-apart from the other days of the week? As with all things spiritual we can look to scripture as our guide. I'm going to try and direct this study towards concepts rather than a long list of every situation one may encounter. Let's look back to the very beginning for our first example, a good idea when studying a concept in scripture is to look at the first mention of something.

1) Don't Create

¹Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their array. ²And in the seventh day Elohim completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. ³And Elohim blessed the seventh day and set it apart, because on it He rested from all His work which Elohim in creating had made. (Genesis 2:1-3)

We are first introduced to this idea of ceasing from our work at the creation of our world. Elohim had been busy creating our reality, everything that we see and experience. Then he stopped His creative effort and rested on the seventh day, blessing it and setting it apart from the other days of the week. Yah was creating new things and also dividing His creation, sorting it. Then He ceased. So, the first concept of resting on Shabbat is resting from creating, dividing, and sorting our world. How do we create, divide, and sort our piece of the world, our domains? Look at your home, what do you do on a daily basis that creates new things, that sorts and divides the things you have? These are the sorts activities that should be rested from. The idea here is that you enjoy what is already accomplished.

2) Don't Work

The next concept is an extension of this idea of not creating, not working:

⁸Remember the Sabbath day, to set it apart. ⁹Six days you labor, and shall do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath of YHVH your Elohim. You do not do any work – you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days YHVH made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore YHVH blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart. (Exodus 20:8-11)

Yah ties the two ideas together here. When we work, what are we doing? We are creating new things, we are rearranging things, we are sorting things. Our work is the storing up of our labor for future use. Today most work for money, and this money is our stored-up labor. We work our jobs to earn money and then expend this money on whatever we want or need. This labor that we do is to cease on Shabbat. We are no longer storing up for the future, on Shabbat, the future is here, this is what we were storing up for. So let us instead enjoy what we have stored and labored for.

This idea is beautiful when we understand what Shabbat represents, the millennial kingdom. Six thousand years man is toiling and storing up our spiritual treasures, but when the Messiah returns, and his one-thousand-year reign begins, we will enjoy the fruit of all that toil, and our rest will truly begin.

The punishment for not ceasing from our work is death:

²Work is done for six days, but on the seventh day it shall be set-apart to you, a Sabbath of rest to YHVH. Anyone doing work on it is put to death. (Exodus 35:2)

This may seem harsh, but with the symbolism this day carries it becomes clear. If we disregard our creator's plan of salvation and His rest for us, we are spiritually dead.

3) Don't Prepare Food

The second time in scripture we are reintroduced to this concept of resting on the seventh day is centered around gathering and cooking food. The children of Yisrael were complaining in the wilderness about food, so Yah gave them a sign:

⁴And YHVH said to Mosheh, "See, I am raining bread from the heavens for you. And the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, in order to try them, whether they walk in My Torah or not. ⁵And 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.

Skipping ahead to verse 19:

¹⁹And Mosheh said, "Let no one leave any of it until morning." ²⁰And they did not listen to Mosheh, so some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Mosheh was wroth with them. ²¹And they gathered it every morning, each one according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted. ²²And it came to be, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Mosheh. ²³And he said to them, "This is what YHVH has said, 'Tomorrow is a rest, a Sabbath set-apart to YHVH. That which you bake, bake; and that which you cook, cook. And lay up for yourselves all that is left over, to keep it until morning.' " ²⁴And they laid it up till morning, as Mosheh commanded. And it did not stink, and no worm was in it. ²⁵And Mosheh said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to YHVH, today you do not find it in the field. ²⁶Gather it six days, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, there is none. ²⁷And it came to be that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. ²⁸And YHVH said to Mosheh, "How long shall you refuse to guard My commands and My Torot? ²⁹See, because YHVH has given you the Sabbath, therefore He is giving you bread for two days on the sixth day. Let each one stay in his place, do not let anyone go out of his place on the seventh day. ³⁰So the people rested on the seventh day. (Exodus 16:4-5; 19-30)

Yah gave the people bread from heaven to gather six days a week, but on the seventh day there was none. We are told they gathered twice as much on the sixth day and kept it stored up so that they would have food to eat on the seventh. This was confirmed by another miracle in that the manna which normally went bad the next day, on Shabbat it did not. So, the first concept here is part of our rest on Shabbat is not gathering food. This would be not harvesting your field, like picking all your apples off your backyard tree.

However, we do see it is permissible to get enough food just to eat if you are hungry from the New Testament:

¹At that time Yeshua went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And His taught ones were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain, to eat. ²And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your taught ones are doing what is not right to do on the Sabbath!" ³But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴how he went into the House of Elohim and ate the showbread which was not right for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵"Or did you not read in the Torah that on the Sabbath the priests in the Set-apart Place profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? ⁶"But I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the Set-apart Place. ⁷"And if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion and not offering,' you would not have condemned the blameless. (Matthew 12:1-7)

So, we don't need to be extreme about this if someone is hungry or there are extenuating circumstances. But the concept is that you have six days to get your food, get it done in that timeframe. If you want to go get an apple off your tree on Shabbat, no big deal, just don't go and harvest the whole tree.

²³And he said to them, "This is what YHVH has said, 'Tomorrow is a rest, a Sabbath set-apart to YHVH. That which you bake, bake; and that which you cook, cook. And lay up for yourselves all that is left over, to keep it until morning.' " ²⁴And they laid it up till morning, as Mosheh commanded. And it did not stink, and no worm was in it. ²⁵And Mosheh said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to YHVH, today you do not find it in the field. (Exodus 16:23-25)

The other concept from (Exodus 16) we see is not baking or cooking our food. The words for bake and cook are doubled, meaning utterly bake or utterly cook. The doubling of a word in Hebrew is used to emphasize the word. This shows us that we need to bake and cook our food for the seventh day on the day before. In our congregation, we decided a while ago that warming up food that was prepared the day before is not a violation of this command. We allow crockpots and warmers, just so long as it isn't a big distraction from the day. So, no cooking on Shabbat. We also get a sense of this from (Exodus 35):

³Do not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day. (Exodus 35:3)

The typical use of kindling a fire in your dwelling would be used for cooking. There are other uses for fire in the home: heating, light, working, but cooking would be included there as well. So not lighting fires in your home for any use is included in the prohibitions as well.

4) Don't Buy, Sell, or Trade

The next concept is an extension of the prohibition on gathering food, not buying or selling anything on Shabbat. We see this born out in (Nehemiah):

³¹and that if the peoples of the land bring wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a set-apart day, and we would forego the seventh year and the interest of every hand. (Nehemiah 10:31)

Also (Chapter 13):

¹⁵In those days I saw in Yehudāh those treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, and figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Yerushalayim on the Sabbath day. So I warned them on the day they sold food. ¹⁶And men of Tsor dwelt there, bringing in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Yehudāh, and in Yerushalayim. ¹⁷Then I contended with the nobles of Yehudāh, and said to them, "What evil matter is this that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? ¹⁸"Did not your fathers do the same so that our Elohim brought all this evil on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Yisra'ēl by profaning the Sabbath." ¹⁹And it came to be, when the gates of Yerushalayim were shaded before the Sabbath, that I commanded the doors to be shut, and commanded that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath. And I stationed some of my servants at the gates, so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day. ²⁰And the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares spent the night outside Yerushalayim once or twice, ²¹and I warned them, and said to them, "Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do so again, I lay hands on you!" From that time on they came no more on the Sabbath. (Nehemiah 13:15-21)

The merchants of all sorts of goods, food and other items, were selling in Yerushalayim on Shabbat and Nehemiah put a stop to it, he closed the gates of the city. So, we shouldn't be shopping on this day either, for food or anything else. It dovetails with the idea of ceasing from creating. We buy stuff to add to our world, our domain; we should instead be happy to enjoy what we have already.

The other concept we get from this is not bearing a burden on Shabbat. The context is carrying wares through the city gate. The concept can be seen as not preparing for work or not moving a bunch of heavy stuff around. So, for example, moving your furniture out of your home on Shabbat would be a violation of this. I would also include just rearranging your furniture as well. But what about taking something small out of your house, a key for example? Clearly that wouldn't be such a burden, not any more than wearing your clothes. This idea can be taken to extremes, but the line is somewhere between moving your couch out of your house and taking a key out.

5) Assemble Together

The Sabbath day is a gathering of Yah's people:

³Six days work is done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a set-apart gathering. You do no work, it is a Sabbath to YHVH in all your dwellings. (Leviticus 23:3)

Throughout the history of Shabbat, it has been a time for assembly. This can take on different forms in different times, but the idea is that we are to gather together somehow. More specifically, we

are to gather together to worship our creator for which this day is made. We see from Hebrews this concept, although Shabbat isn't mentioned:

²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging, and so much more as you see the day coming near. (Hebrews 10:25)

One of the traps we have seen in this walk is that Hasatan tries to divide Yah's people. They get offended, or they think they have all the answers and everyone else is wrong, or they just don't like to be with other people. One by one they get picked off and they can't fellowship with others. Many times, we see them become lone wolves. This is not what Yah wants for His people. He wants a set-apart gathering.

6) Delight Yourself In Yah

The final concept comes from (Isaiah):

¹³If you do turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My set-apart day, and shall call the Sabbath 'a delight,' the set-apart day of YHVH 'esteemed,' and shall esteem it, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in YHVH. ¹⁴And I shall cause you to ride on the heights of the earth, and feed you with the inheritance of Ya`aqob your father. For the mouth of YHVH has spoken! (Isaiah 58:13-14)

The idea here is: who's day is it? It is Yah's day, not ours. We should be focused on Him and not our own business. We should be doing His ways, His pleasure, speaking His words and not our own. Make the day about Yah.

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, rest from creative acts, rest from dividing and sorting your things, from working for the future, from your job, don't gather or cook your food, don't light fires, don't buy, sell, or trade merchandise, don't carry burdens; make this day about Yah and assemble together in His name. This is not an exhaustive list of everything you can or cant do on Shabbat, but the concepts explored here should get you on the right path to keeping Yah's day set-apart.