

Ki Tissa 5782
Rabbi Greg Harris

Exodus 31:16-17

וּשְׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם:
בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹתוֹת הוּא לְעַלְמִם
כִּי־שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ
וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפֵשׁ:

*The Israelite people shall keep/ observe/ protect the sabbath, observing/ doing/ making the sabbath throughout the ages as a covenant for all time:
it shall be a sign/ symbol/ marker/ indicator/ prompt for all time between Me and
the people of Israel.*

*For in six days God made heaven and earth,
and on the seventh day [God] ceased from work and was refreshed.*

Recited multiple times:

- liturgy of Friday night services
- Amidah of Shabbat
- before kiddish on Shabbat day

Ibn Ezra (12th century, Spain): *They shall keep count of the days of the week so that they do not forget which day is the Sabbath. One shall set his affairs in order and take care of his needs on the sixth day so that he will keep the Sabbath and not desecrate it.*

Sforno (16th century, Italy): *on a day that is totally Shabbat - the afterlife.*

Or HaChayim (18th century, Morocco): *In our context the Torah means that the Sabbath should not be considered as a burden because many activities are prohibited on that day, but that it should be eagerly awaited and looked forward to. The words **לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת** are designed to counter the prevailing perception that the Sabbath is a day on which one is passive, rests up and treats it as a day on which to indulge one's laziness. The basic purpose of the Sabbath is not to provide physical rest for the body but to actively fulfil the various commandments associated with the Sabbath.*

SHABBAT IS FOR CONNECTION AND WONDER

Rabbi Danny Gordis, God Was Not in the Fire p.106

While this explanation of Shabbat is important, it also fails to inspire many Jews. They wonder: How am I to take this idea seriously if I'm not convinced that the world was created in six days? Why should I take a huge portion of my precious free time and adopt all these constraints?...

These are important questions, but they miss part of the point. The idea of Shabbat is not simply that imitating God is important for its own sake. Rather, Shabbat insists that this "imitation" has important spiritual and emotional implications for the people involved in it. How? One implication is the element of connection. Indeed, Shabbat is largely about connection. Shabbat gives Jews a chance to appreciate the people who give meaning to their life.... For many Jews, no matter how Jewishly learned or accustomed to Shabbat they may be, what remains compelling about Shabbat are the connections and relationships that it renews and reinvigorates... the simple human dimension of Shabbat.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Halakhic Man p5-7

How radically different is the approach of homo religious to God's world from that of cognitive man! When cognitive man observes and scrutinizes the great and exalted cosmos, it is with the intent of understanding and comprehending its features; cognitive man's desire is to uncover the secret of the world and to unravel the problems of existence. When theoretical and scientific man peers into the cosmos, he is filled with one exceedingly powerful yearning, which is to search for clarity and understanding, for solutions and resolutions....

The homo religious acts differently. When he confronts God's world, when he gazes at the myriads of events and phenomena occurring in the cosmos, he does not desire to transform the secrets embedded in creation into simple equations that a mere tyro [novice] is capable of grasping. On the contrary, homo religious is intrigued by the mystery of existence - the mysterium tremendum - and wants to emphasize that mystery. He gazes at that which is obscure without the intent of explaining it and inquires into that which is concealed without the intent of receiving the reward of clear understanding.

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם: