

Introduction: The Historicity of our Timeless Delight

In his commentary on Exodus, the great German biblical commentator and Reform rabbi Benno Jacob provides a beautiful vision of the first Shabbat observed by Israel, the Shabbat that served as the climax of the first week of the manna's falling:

No name (for the manna) would be used until the Israelites themselves provided it. This occurred only after all Israel together, as a single household, had observed the Sabbath. Meals have always united families, but only on the Sabbath, when everyone was present and the meal was specifically provided by God, did the Israelites realize the treasure which they possessed in their family and in the Sabbath. Only an Israelite who was celebrating the Sabbath could have known the meaning of manna.^[1]

R. Jacob's commentary is compelling for two reasons. First, it neatly addresses two textual issues— that the Torah introduces the term “House of Israel”^[2] for the first time to describe Israel's naming of the manna in Exodus 16:31, and that this naming occurs right after “the people ‘sabbathed’ on the seventh day” (16:30), a full week after Israel's initial astonishment upon encountering the manna (16:15). Second, even though the R. Jacob's vision of the Shabbat experience was written in a very different time, place, and milieu, it would resonate with any Shabbat-observing family today, as it would have over the centuries: It is at the Shabbat table where we relax and take stock of the world among our loved ones, where we are given to playful but meaningful contemplation of the world (often including various kinds of wordplay), and where we most truly recognize the gifts that God has bestowed upon us. In short, this is the Shabbat experience as “a taste of the world to come,”^[3] an idea encompassing three intertwined themes: (a) that the cares of our material existence recede over the course of Shabbat to be replaced by a feeling of abundance; (b) that our Shabbat experience transcends our day-to-day experience of time; and (c) that we experience a closer connection to God, in part because we ascribe the sense of abundance and timelessness to His benefaction.

But has the “Shabbat experience” over the millenia been sufficiently stable that it is reasonable to suppose that every Shabbat experience— from the first to the present— reflects these themes? Consider how the Shabbat has changed over the millennia. For example, while there is nothing more central to our experience of the Shabbat than the reading of the weekly Torah portion, this cycle was unknown before the time of Ezra and it took centuries for it to take the settled format it has today. Or consider that none of our Shabbat services (*tefilot*) would have been known during the Second Temple Period, that our Shabbat hymns (*zemirot*) were largely produced in the last thousand years, or that the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service that seems so intrinsic to the opening of the Shabbat was introduced five hundred years ago. And finally, let us consider R. Jacob's imagery of Shabbat meals in light of debates in the Talmud regarding how many Shabbat meals there should be (Shabbat 117b) or the *tanna* R. Yosi ben Zimra's praise for those who fast on Shabbat (Berakhot 31b). Our experience of the Shabbat has since become institutionalized in such a way that these positions are no longer thinkable, but it is jarring to think they once were. Put differently, how can the Shabbat provide a sense of timelessness— as reflected in Heschel's notion of the Shabbat as a “palace in time”^[4] and Kaplan's notion of the Shabbat as a “day of eternity”^[5]— if it has changed so much?

In what follows, I first sharpen this question. As we will see, the evolving nature of the Shabbat should in fact not disturb our sense of the Shabbat's continuity from the time of the prophets through the rabbinic sages to the present time, and should arguably even enhance it. But this discussion also helps identify the crucial question: *Was the first Shabbat "a taste of the world to come" as ours is?* We will see that this conception of Shabbat goes back as far as the inspiring eschatological visions of the prophets.¹⁶¹ And yet, we will also see that a close reading of Israel's experience of the first Shabbat raises serious questions as to whether this conception of the Shabbat was applicable. And if that is so, can we say that their Shabbat was our Shabbat?

Having laid out the basis for this question, I will suggest how an even deeper reading of the text—one informed by the recognition that this was the very first time that human beings had experienced the Shabbat (and the seven-day week more generally) and that these were former slaves who had reason to be skeptical of a tempo dictated by an inscrutable and all-powerful king—indicates that experience of Shabbat as a "taste of the world to come" indeed lies in the very first Shabbat, but that Israel needed a divine push to appreciate it. Ironically, greater appreciation for the continuity of the Shabbat comes from recognizing the radical difference between the mindsets of we who have known Shabbat all our lives and the mindsets of those who encountered it for the first time.

Continuities and Discontinuities in the Evolution of Shabbat

Several observations help to clarify why the crucial challenge to our sense of the continuity of Shabbat pertains to the first Shabbat in particular.

First, core features of the Shabbat are clearly in place from the earliest biblical accounts. In particular, none of the various historical changes or variations on Shabbat experience reviewed above stray beyond the three basic parameters given in the Torah's commandments regarding the Shabbat: (a) setting aside of one day in every seven in which "*melakhah*" (creative labor) is strictly forbidden (Exodus 20:10; 31:14-15; 35:2; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:14); (b) infusing the day with "*kedushah*" (holiness; Exodus 16:23; 20:8; 20:11; 31:14-15 35:2; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:12); and (c) facilitating the receipt of God's "*berakhah*" (blessing; Exodus 20:11).

These three elements of course hearken to God's rest on the seventh-day of creation (Genesis 2:2-3), making Shabbat the principal means of fulfilling *Imitatio Dei* and of proclaiming God as creator of the world. Any known version of the Shabbat since the Torah seems to occur within these three parameters. Indeed, it is even possible that the practice of (likely a minority of) Second Temple Jews to refrain from marital intimacy and/or from eating can be understood as consistent with the themes of holiness (and perhaps of blessing) associated with Yom Kippur, known as the "Sabbath of Sabbaths" (Leviticus 23:32).

Second, the evolution of Shabbat observance (within the three parameters) is natural and expected. It is telling that while the Mishnah notes that the laws of Shabbat are like "mountains suspended on a hair since there are so many laws but so little scriptural" basis for them (Hagigah 1:8), the Sages clearly do not consider this to be problematic.

One possible reason is that there may be more foundation than meets the eye for the thirty-nine laws of creative labor that serve as the foundation for Shabbat laws.^[7] In addition, a unique feature of the Torah's presentation of the Shabbat is that it commands Israel to "make" the Shabbat (Exodus 31:16; Deuteronomy 5:15). The implication is that the Shabbat is in part an empty vessel for Israel to fill with content. This is arguably a fourth important parameter defining the Shabbat and the reason that Shabbat (uniquely, with the exception of circumcision) is described in covenantal terms—as a *brit*. We are partners with God in putting flesh on the bare-bones Shabbat experience set in the Torah.

Third, beyond rabbinic attestations to Shabbat as a taste of the world to come, the various millennia-old stories and ideas about the Shabbat found in rabbinic literature resonate strongly with contemporary Shabbat observers. Consider the famous Talmudic story (Shabbat 33b) of how Rabban Shimon bar Yochai and his son were inspired by the love for the Shabbat expressed by the simple Jew who beautified his *havdalah* ceremony by taking pains to have one herb that stood for "Observe the Sabbath Day" and one that stood for "Keep the Sabbath Day." This story from two thousand years ago sounds like the Shabbat we know and love.

Finally, the themes associated with Shabbat as a taste of the world to come are clearly attested in the prophets. Consider Isaiah's treatment of the Shabbat (58:13) in particular.^[8] Not only are his twin concepts of *Oneg Shabbat* ("delight in Shabbat") and *Kevod Shabbat* ("honoring Shabbat") known to us from their rabbinic elaborations, but we are familiar with the means Isaiah recommends for accomplishing this: by refraining from "conducting our affairs on my holy day" and by not "following our [routine] ways," "realizing our business," and "speaking of [worldly] matters". Moreover, this image of an idyllic Shabbat is presented in the context of a) an Edenic evocation of our role in (emulating God by) feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and being loyal to our "*basar*" (kin)^[9]; an Edenic description of the plenty provided by God^[10]; and c) intertextual connections to an inspiringly utopian eschatological vision with which Isaiah concludes, where *oneg* and *kavod* are also referenced.^[11] Isaiah (56:1-7) also offers us a utopian eschatological vision that explicitly references the Shabbat, here as a universal experience transcending Israel. In the last several hundred years, this vision is increasingly realized in the spread of the seven-day week to become the dominant day-to-day social rhythm for humanity.

We have seen then that the notion of the Shabbat as a taste of the world to come goes back to the prophets and that this conception is linked with the Shabbat of creation. But what about the Shabbat of the Torah itself? Is there any link between these Shabbat themes and the experience of the first Shabbat (and subsequent ones) by Israel in the wilderness?

The Elusiveness of the First Shabbat

Two considerations suggest that the answer is no. First, what little eschatology there is in the Torah^[12] does not seem to reference the Shabbat. Second, while the double portion of the manna on Friday and the resumption on Sunday was seemingly designed to impart the three themes of the experience of the world-to-come reviewed above—transcendence of the day-to-day toil; the feeling of abundance; and a heightened connection to God—the people fail to experience this, at least at first.

To review, let us quote the Torah's description of the first Shabbat in Exodus chapter 16:

22 On the sixth day they gathered double the amount of food, two *omer*-fulls for each; and then all the princes of the congregation came and told Moses. 23 He said to them, "This is what God has said: 'Tomorrow is a day of rest, God's holy Sabbath. Bake what you would bake and boil what you would boil; and all that is left set aside to be kept until morning.'" 24 So they set it aside until morning, as Moses had commanded; and it did not turn putrid, and there were no maggots in it. 25 Then Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is God's Sabbath; today you will not find it on the field. 26 For a six-day (period) you shall gather it; on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none on that day." 27 And it was on the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather, but they found nothing. 28 And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you (collective) refuse to obey My commandments and My teachings?"

On the morning of the first Shabbat, the people surely should have experienced a powerful feeling of freedom from day-to-day drudgery coupled with the sense that their needs were being taken care of by a benevolent, higher power. After all, they discovered that morning that the second portion had indeed been preserved (unlike on every night of the week; 16:20), and this was the second manna miracle^[13] that neutralized their urge to worry about how to feed themselves in the face of competitive pressure.^[14] This was a moment to relax and wonder at how fortunate they were to receive God's benefaction.

Instead, they are anxious, unruly, and faithless. The day begins with Moses encouraging them to eat the food that had been preserved. That he felt the need to tell them this implies that they had hesitated, likely for fear that they would have no food left if they ate it. Accordingly, Moses adds an explanation for why they should eat the stored food. He clarifies what he meant when he referred to the seventh day as "God's (holy) Sabbath"—i.e., that no manna would fall that day but it would resume the next day as part of the seven-day manna/Shabbat cycle. But if this was meant to quiet their anxiety about how they would eat when their stores ran out, it failed because "some of the people" searched for manna anyway. Moreover, this failure does not seem restricted to the group of would-be manna-collectors. God's exasperation seems directed at Moses (the usual *lemor*, indicating that the words should be related to the people, is missing) and the entire people (second person plural). Moreover, God sees this as a deep failure, with Shabbat observance standing for all of His "commandments and teachings," deploying language to describe their stubbornness that had previously been reserved to describe Pharaoh's stubborn rejection of God.^[15]

Why the Meaning of the Shabbat was Elusive

To be sure, this was just the initial stage of Israel's experience of the first Shabbat. Their failure was soon reversed to the point that R. Jacob was moved to describe the first Shabbat experience as akin to our own. But before we can appreciate how Israel in fact came to "taste of the world to come" on that first Shabbat, we must first appreciate why the initial failure was understandable. Two contextual considerations are key here.

The first consideration is well captured by R. Aryeh Kaplan:

How do we know which day was the Sabbath? Who counted it from the time of Creation? The answer is that G-d Himself revealed the exact day of the Sabbath in giving the Manna.^[16]

As I have noted in earlier *Lehrhaus* essays,^[17] Kaplan's observation is consistent with the scholarly consensus that the seven-day week is a purely human cycle that was a "Jewish invention"^[18] unknown to any other civilization, including neighboring ones. This consensus is also reflected in the plain meaning of the Torah's narrative. God "sabbath" on the seventh day of creation. But Shabbat (which means both the Sabbath and the week in the Hebrew Bible) does not appear as a *noun*, an entity known to human beings, until the first Shabbat of the manna. Accordingly, Rashi (*ad loc.*) argues that when Genesis 2:3 states that God "blessed" and "sanctified" the seventh day, the text is referring to the "future" miracles of the manna.^[19] After all, there is no textual evidence that Adam or any of his descendants were aware of the seven-day week.^[20] Accordingly, when we read *parashat ha-man* (Exodus 16), we must view matters through the mindset of people who could not imagine the continuous cycle of the seven-day week that we have taken for granted all of our lives.

In order to appreciate the Torah's account of the first week, we must also adopt a second shift in perspective: we must imagine ourselves as feeling dominated by and even terrified of an awesome power. The people of Israel were recently-freed slaves who had known nothing but cruel tyranny and oppression. Their habits of heart and mind came from the toil they were forced to endure "day after day" (Exodus 5: 13, 19) without end, when they had been required to fan out across the Egyptian countryside to meet an impossible quota set by a tyrant.^[21] To be sure, they had been delivered from such tyranny. But their savior was a king who was invisible, utterly inscrutable, and even more powerful than the king and civilization that had terrorized them. Indeed, while this "man of war" seemed to be on their side at the crossing of the sea and they had thereby proclaimed that He should "reign forever" (15:3, 18), they since had cause for grave doubts about God and themselves. In particular, the events and memories in the wilderness had caused them to panic out of renewed terror that they—who after all, were no more meritorious than the Egyptians—had been brought out into the wilderness to die of starvation. This panic is the immediate impetus for God's initiating the first week of the manna and Shabbat (16:2-4).^[22]

With this context in mind, we can appreciate why Israel had difficulty appreciating the manna and the first Shabbat. On the one hand, the people discovered that they each had as much food as they needed. This created the conditions for an Edenic experience of radical equality.^[23] But on the other hand, it also created the conditions of radical dependence: it was entirely up to God whether they and their families would eat the next day. Accordingly, this regime is later described as a form of "torture" by "tribulations" by Moses (Deuteronomy 8:3-5).^[24] Moreover, it must have felt like *déjà vu* when they were once again required to fan out and collect according to a quota set by the king. What was the point of this? Why, as R. Shimon Bar Yohai's students later asked, did God not just provide Israel with manna once a year rather than force them to go out and collect it every day?^[25] If not cruel, then at least it must have seemed arbitrary.

To be sure, there was a method to this madness: Israel would eventually come to learn that this was a form of training in the manner of a “father training his son,” with the lesson being that we should not flatter ourselves to think that our material prosperity is solely the result of “our energy and the strength of our hands” (Deuteronomy 8:1-18; cf. Exodus 16:4).^[26] But how could they appreciate this during their first week?

Indeed, now consider how they would have experienced the first Shabbat. It seems shocking to us that they did not appreciate the opportunity to relax and enjoy the gift they had been given. But as the Midrash famously notes, they did not recognize this gift at first.^[27] And why should they have? When they learn they should prepare the second of the two portions for the next day, that hardly seems like a reason to rejoice. Moses tells them only that the next day is *Shabbaton Shabbat-Kodesh lashem* (“A Sabbatical God’s Holy Sabbath”). Since Pharaoh had used the word “shabbat” (as a verb) to mean rest from work (Exodus 5:5), they seemingly would have understood it as such. But the straightforward meaning of “God’s Sabbath” is that (as in the creation story) *God would be resting*. What does that have to do with them? And if God is resting the next day, how were they to know that He would not be resting forever?

It is thus very understandable why the people would not have felt the Shabbat as we do, and instead exhibited significant anxiety and faithlessness. It is only on Shabbat morning that they were informed that the Shabbat would be a recurring cycle. And they had yet to actually experience that. And the logic of this cycle would have escaped them. To many, it would have seemed like continued tyranny.^[28]

The pivotal verse

But after this first stage of their experience of the first Shabbat, there is also the second stage that is the focus of R. Jacob’s commentary: “And the people sabbathed on the seventh day. And the House of Israel called it manna...” (Exodus 16:30-31). The first of these verses is only four words. But it represents the perfect fulfillment of the twin ideals of the twin creation stories: the *b-tzelem Elokim* (*Imitatio Dei*) of the first creation story; and the servitude to God of the second creation story (Genesis 2:4-18). The first ideal is reflected by the fact that this is the only biblical verse where a group of human beings are depicted as acting in a manner that had previously been reserved for God acting on or for Himself (“And He sabbathed on the seventh day”; Genesis 2:2). The second ideal is reflected in the fact that in resting, they were (finally) obeying God’s command—succeeding where Adam and Eve failed, by refraining from going where God did not want them to go as part of a larger agreement where God committed to feeding them.^[29] The people have seemingly been transported to Eden, an apparent taste of the world-to-come.

But what happened to transform their mindset from anxiety and faithlessness to tranquility and transcendence? Let us now read and break down the intervening verse (Exodus 16:29), which is a continuation of God's words of exasperation at Israel's failure to "keep my commandments and instructions":

1. See (plural)
2. that God has given you the Sabbath.
3. That is why He is giving you two-days (worth of) bread on the sixth day.
4. Dwell/Sit (plural) each man under it.
5. No man should leave his place on the seventh day.

The first element in this verse sets the stage that something momentous is afoot. *Seeing is believing* is a theme in the Exodus story that begins with Moses's vision of the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-6), continues with God's training Moses to perform signs so that Israel will believe he is God's messenger (4:1,5; 4:30-31), continues through the salvation at the crossing of the sea (14:13, 30-31), continues through the initial witnessing of the manna (16:7,10,15), and will be picked up again just after the Shabbat, when Moses tells Aaron to preserve some manna in a jar to be placed "before God" because God has commanded that in this way future generations "will see the food/bread which I fed you when I took them out of Egypt" (16:32).

But all of these cases of *seeing is believing* are instances where people either see something on their own and thereby have their faith reinforced, or are told that such seeing (and hence believing) will occur. The case in our verse is quite different. Here, *God is telling them to pay attention to something that has already transpired and should have inspired faith, but which they have missed*. Shabbat, after all, is just negative time, a moment created by our social agreement to stay put and not try to advance our day-to-day projects.

This negative time becomes visible to us because of the cycle in which it is embedded.^[30] But on a given Shabbat, the cycle cannot be seen. The Shabbat becomes visible to us only because our fellow Jews are committed to acting in a distinctive manner on that day. But this was not happening. God was inviting the people to look at the situation differently, and by doing so, it would *become different*; it would become the Shabbat.

Let us skip to element five. This is the second of two actions ascribed to human beings in the verse. Putting aside the halakhic meaning of "not leaving one's place," there is twofold significance in helping to create the Shabbat. First, one cannot achieve a sense of transcendent timelessness if one is moving around. Since time is a function of change, time will feel like it is standing still only when we are sitting still. When we rest in place, we are letting the world act upon us rather than acting upon the world. Second, the injunction is not to rest in any place but to rest in "one's" place. Each member of Israel apparently has a place in the world—even in the wilderness. This is no small thing given that we are constantly striving to achieve such a place, and a feeling of ontological security more generally. This takes us to R. Jacob's interpretation. Each person is at home, with their family.

And now consider elements 2 and 3. These elements address the hypothesis that the Shabbat is for the people, not (just) for God. Just as this first week is framed by God's "giving food/bread" to the people (16:8), the people are now made to understand that God is giving them the Shabbat. They effectively learn that "God's Sabbath" means *a day for them that is dedicated to sanctifying God's name*. The double portion of manna is the basis for this gift.

Remarkably, God here refers to Himself in the third-person, and He refers to the gift as one that has already been given. The effect is to center the people's experience and to suggest that the gift does not require reciprocation or obeisance. It is theirs. They are just being asked to appreciate the gift and recognize the giver. To be sure, they are being asked not to leave their place. But as Moses first told them, they do not need to leave their place to gather food. And perhaps they are beginning to understand that resting in place is key to recognizing and savoring the gift.

Finally, there is element four: they are also being asked to "dwell" or "sit" "under it." This is perhaps the key element in the entire verse. While it has long been a mystery, it should not be. There are only two instances of *la-shevet ish tahat*, "a man sitting/dwelling under" in the Hebrew Bible. In each of these instances- I Kings 5:5 and Micah 4:4 – the phrase continues in the same way: "... dwell under one's vineyard and one's fig tree." And in each of these cases, the larger context is the same: they are utopian visions of the good life, bestowed upon every member of a realm by a benevolent king.

The first of these cases is a real-world king: Solomon, and it is at the heart of the depiction of Solomon's greatness—how his unparalleled wisdom brought prosperity, unity, and renown to Israel/Judah, thereby paving the way for the building of the Temple. Strikingly, it also appears just after a description of the bounteous bread and meat that Solomon was able to provide for his people (I Kings 5:2-3).

The second case is a utopian vision of the future. Following one of the most famous prophetic visions of collective welfare— "And they will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not take up sword against nation, they shall never know war"—it presents perhaps the quintessential image of how individuals will live well in the world-to-come: "And every man shall sit under his vineyard and his fig tree with nothing to disturb him, for it is the Lord of Hosts who spoke." As R. Stuart Halpern wrote recently,¹³¹¹ this line was cited fifty times by George Washington in his speeches and was a touchstone by later presidents as well. Halpern also notes that Dr. Martin Luther King cited the verse both in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech and in his American Dream sermon. The line is also referenced in the musical *Hamilton*, and in Amanda Gorman's inspiring poem recited at President Biden's inauguration. It is clearly an image that resonates as a salient ideal today.

The line clearly resonated in biblical times as well. A wider review of related biblical texts indicates that the language of "dwelling under one's vineyard and fig tree" was a biblical paradigm for the good life bestowed by a benevolent king, where everyone had their (equal) place in the world and could live tranquilly.

A variant of the verse appears as part of another eschatological vision by Zechariah (3:10), and another variant is referenced by Sennacherib's general Rabshakeh when he taunts the besieged Jerusalemites about the King of Assyria's superiority over the King of Judah (II Kings 18:31; Isaiah 36:16). Variants are also featured in two negative prophetic visions of punishments for Israel's sins (Joel 1:7, 12; Hosea 2:13-14), the latter of which seems to draw an analogy between the provision of the Shabbat and the provision of the vineyard and the fig tree.^[32] Finally, it is intriguing that in the version of the plagues presented by Psalms 105, there is an additional element added that is not in the Exodus version (105:33): "He struck their vines and their fig trees, and he broke the trees of their territory." The upshot is that God is sending a clear message that should be well understood in the biblical idiom once one replaces fig tree and vineyard with manna/Shabbat—i.e., the relevant source of sustenance in the wilderness: *You may have only known kings as tyrants in your past, but pay close attention: Not only have I struck down the king who was terrorizing you, but I am giving you the good life. Just take a look and relax.* And so they did.

Conclusion

We have seen that there is strong textual basis for R. Jacob's intuition that the first Shabbat would have felt like ours. We of course cannot know what it would have felt like to sit in tents and share a meal of manna we had collected the prior day and prepared before Shabbat. But insofar as we are fortunate to feel the transcendent timelessness of Shabbat and to dine without worrying about where our Sunday meal will come from, we too may come to appreciate as they did that this good life is a gift from God. Our close reading of the biblical text suggests that these elements of the Shabbat were there from the very first Shabbat. Indeed, given that the seven-day week was a radical innovation, one that ran against every natural instinct, it is hard to see how it could not have been there from the beginning. If the Shabbat were not a great experience early on, how and why would Israel have maintained it? Ahad Ha'am's famous dictum that "More than the Jewish people kept the Shabbat, the Shabbat kept the Jewish people" has an important kernel of truth. But it misses *why* Israel kept the Shabbat: because it provided a taste of the world to come.

Yet if it is hard to see how the Shabbat/week could be sustained unless it provided a weekly experience of the good life, this does not entail that it was the prospect of the good life that prompted the launching of the Shabbat/week. After all, if it were obvious to those who had never observed the Shabbat that the Shabbat was such a good experience, we would expect to see similar cycles initiated by other civilizations. The absence of this evidence is very loud. Indeed, while we might expect the Shabbat to spread to neighboring civilizations who witness Jewish enjoyment of the Shabbat, this rarely happened throughout history. In general, our neighbors—even those who adopted the seven-day week and used the "weekend" to mark their religious holy days—tended to find our Shabbat observance to be costly and alien.^[33] This is not surprising, since our own children require significant training until Shabbat observance becomes habituated. It takes awhile for them to come to recognize the Shabbat and to (if all goes well) fall in love with it. In this respect, the Torah's depiction of the first week is essentially describing a population of toddlers.^[34]

As such, not only does the story of the first week portray a transcendent experience of Shabbat that resonates to this day, it also sensitizes us to why this “palace in time” is so unique: it is not clear how and why anyone would build it. The story of the manna is a story of how people might be trained to observe the Shabbat/seven-day week even when they could not think of it on their own. And even when the conditions were just right, they needed a divine push on that first Shabbat when they had yet to experience a full cycle. The story suggests that Ahad Ha’am was wrong to privilege Shabbat’s role in preserving the Jewish people over the Jewish people’s role—with an initial divine boost to appreciate the gift—in keeping the Shabbat. Had they not finally “seen” the Shabbat on that first Shabbat in one another’s reactions to it, where would our “day of eternity” be today?

Foot-notes

^[1] Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus*, trans. Walter Jacob in association with Yaakov Elman (Hoboken: Ktav, 1992), 473-474.

^[2] R. Jacob explains that “House of Israel” has resonances of family and community based on the fact that it appears in moments of national mourning, for Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10.6) and Aaron (Numbers 20.29). The expression “house of Israel” appears two additional times in the Torah (as well as various times in the rest of the Hebrew Bible) in contexts that seem consistent with Benno Jacob’s interpretation: (a) In the very last verse of Exodus (40:38), at the climax of the building of the tabernacle as part of a description of Israel in its ideal state moving through space with God’s glory above; and (b) three times in Leviticus 17 (verses 3, 8, 10), where a principal theme of the laws of slaughtering is that they are particular to members of the Israelite community as well as proselytes who join it. The two instances of “House of Jacob” in the Torah— Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 19:3—also seem to mark moments of tribal unity.

^[3] See especially Berakhot 57b; Genesis Rabbah 17:5.

^[4] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951).

^[5] Aryeh Kaplan, *Sabbath: Day of Eternity* (New York: Orthodox Union, 1974).

^[6] See Samuele Bacchiocchi, “Sabbatical Typologies of Messianic Redemption,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 17, no. 2 (1986): 153-176. Theodore Friedman, “The Sabbath: Anticipation of Redemption,” *Judaism* 16, no. 4 (1967): 443-452.

^[7] See Yoel Bin-Nun, “The 39 Labors Prohibited on Shabbat: From Where are they Derived?” *The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash*.

^[8] The following points are drawn from Friedman, *op cit.* and Bacchiocchi, *op cit.* These treatments also offer evidence that other prophets also draw thematic connections between Shabbat, Eden, and the world-to-come.

^[9] See especially 58:7.

^[10] See especially the prior verse (58:12): “God will lead you always. He will slake your thirst in dry places and give strength to your bones. You will be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters do not disappoint.”

^[11] See 66:11. This latter verse is referenced in the opening to the popular *Shabbat Hayom Lashem* song.

^[12] See especially the references to the “end of days” in Genesis 49; Numbers 24; Deuteronomy 4; Deuteronomy 31.

^[13] The first was the fact that no matter how much any person collected, they always got what they needed but no more (16:17-18)

^[14] See Ezra W. Zuckerman Sivan, “Three in One: Creation, Exodus, and Equality,” *Lehrhaus*, August 3, 2017.

^[15] This the seventh time the root *le-ma'en*, to refuse, appears. All previous occasions referred to Pharaoh.

^[16] *Op cit.*, p.15.

^[17] Zuckerman Sivan, “Three in One.” Ezra W. Zuckerman Sivan, “Between Shabbat and Lynch Mobs,” *Lehrhaus*, June 15, 2017.

^[18] Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Seven Day Circle: The History and Meaning of the Week* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 11.

^[19] See also Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Chumash: The Five Books of Moses, Sefer Shemos*, trans. Daniel Haberman (New York: Feldheim), 346.

^[20] See Ezra W. Zuckerman Sivan, “Why Doesn’t Abraham Get to Enjoy the Weekend?” *Lehrhaus*, October 26, 2017.

^[21] See discussions on Pharaoh’s “Anti-Shabbat tantrum” in Zuckerman Sivan, “Three in One,” *op cit.* and “Between Shabbat to Lynch Mobs,” *op cit.*

^[22] See Ezra W. Zuckerman Sivan, “Why Do We Deserve God’s Favor?” *Lehrhaus*, January 25, 2018.

^[23] See Zuckerman Sivan, “Three in One,” *op cit.*

^[24] See Shuli Taubes, “The Affliction of the Manna: A Test of Faith,” *YUTorah*, January 29, 2012.

^[25] Yoma 76a.

^[26] Ibid.

^[27] See Midrash Lekah Tov (on 16:29), Yalkut Shimoni 261, and Midrash Tehillim 92:1. Shabbat 10b and Beitzah 16a focus on Exodus 31:13 as the relevant proof-text but see Ezra W. Zuckerman, “The Gift of Shabbat as the Trace of God’s Hand on our Faces” (unpublished, available from author) for how this verse and Exodus 16:29 complement each other.

^[28] As Hirsch, *op cit.*, p. 271, put it “All these (Shabbat and Sabbatical laws) would not only be folly but would actually be crimes were they ordained not by God but by man. No man has the right to lead women and children into a barren desert; no man has the right to order cessation of work for a whole day, let alone for a whole year periodically.”

^[29] For an extended discussion of how this first week (and succeeding weeks) of the manna/Shabbat create an experience that melds the two creation stories, see “Three in One,” *op cit.*

^[30] Arguably, by saying “Shabbat” here and not “the day of Shabbat” (as in Exodus 20:8 or Deuteronomy 5:12), the emphasis is on the day of the Shabbat as a vehicle for recognizing the weekly cycle.

^[31] Stuart Halpern, “This Unifying Verse from the Torah is Perfect for an Inaugural Speech,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, January 19, 2021.

^[32] “And I will end (*v-hishbati*) all her rejoicing: Her festivals, new moons, and sabbaths— All her festive seasons. I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, which she thinks are a fee she received from her lovers; I will turn them into brushwood, and beasts of the field shall devour them.”

^[33] E.g., Elliot Horowitz, “Fourth and Long: Presenting (And Resenting) the Sabbath,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 97, no. 3 (2007): 438-462.

^[34] See Shabbat 10b and Beitzah 16a. And see Zuckerman Sivan, “The Gift of Shabbat,” *op cit.*