



The Shabbat Crisis

STORIES OF THE POWER
OF SHABBAT

WHY *HASHEM* GAVE US
THIS SACRED DAY

SHABBAT IN DANGER

Copyright © 2025 by Sharing Hope Publications. Work can be printed and shared for non-commercial purposes without permission.

Bible passages are taken from the Tree of Life (TLV) Translation of the Bible. Copyright © 2015 by The Messianic Jewish Family Bible Society.

Language: English

First Edition
2025



Table of Contents

01	
The Day That Keeps Us	4
02	
For Whom Is Shabbat?	10
03	
Shabbat's Special Meaning for Us Today	16
04	
A Prophecy of a Persecuting Kingdom	24
05	
When Shabbat Is Trampled	34

An oil painting depicting a group of people on a wooden dock, seen from behind, waving their hands towards a large steamship. The man in the foreground wears a dark top hat and a long dark coat. The ship has two large red funnels with white tops, and white smoke is rising from them. The scene is set against a warm, hazy sky. The text "The Day That Keeps Us" is overlaid in the center in a white serif font.

The Day That Keeps Us



01

Twelve-year-old Rose stepped onto a dock at the Polish harbor, where she would board a ship to America. This journey would begin a new phase in her life. Her family had been saving for a long time to send one of their children to America in hopes of a better life there. Rose, the youngest of nine siblings, had been chosen to go.

Now, the day had arrived, and Rose's father was there to say goodbye to her.

He admonished her, "Rose, my child, remember: [*HASHEM*] is watching over you every step of the way. Remember His laws and keep them well. Never forget: It's not just that the Jews have kept Shabbat, but Shabbat has kept the Jews. It will be hard in the new land. Don't forget who you are. Keep Shabbat—no matter what sacrifice you must make."

"Father, Father!" she said, wrapping her arms around him and hugging him tight. He returned the embrace and held his precious child one last time.

As the ship's horn sounded, Rose's father took the cue. He walked down the gangplank as she remained at the railing and watched her father's hunched figure grow smaller and smaller.

During the voyage, questions filled Rose's mind. Would her relatives in America be at the harbor in New York to meet her? Would they accept her into their home? Everything felt uncertain and frightening. Rose wondered if she would be successful in this new land.

At last, Rose arrived and disembarked from the ship to find her relatives waiting for her. They welcomed her and brought her to live with them.

She soon found that they lived much differently, though. Rose's relatives had, to a great extent, turned from their religion, viewing the customs as old-fashioned.

Rose also made changes. She began to wear different clothes and cut her hair to appear more stylish. But she always remembered her father's words. She could not dishonor Shabbat.

Battling with Her Conscience

Before long, Rose found a job working at a factory as a sewing machine operator. She had a prob-

lem, though: the job required her to work on Shabbat, and she wasn't brave enough to explain that she could not do so.

And yet, her conscience bothered her. For the first three weekends, she managed to find excuses to avoid working on Shabbat. But finally, her boss gave her an ultimatum: "Rose, I like your work, and I like you. But this Sabbath business has got to stop. Either you come in this Saturday, or you can look for a new job." He was kind, but firm.

When Rose's relatives heard about her situation, they pushed her to work on Shabbat. "Rose, sweetheart, listen to us. It's for your own good," they urged. She felt torn. How could she go against her conscience? All week, she battled in her mind between her desire to keep Shabbat and the pull to please her relatives.

On Friday, while at work, she continued to wrestle with her dilemma. As she listened to the humming of the sewing machines, she wondered if it would be so wrong to come and do this work the following day. She mused to herself, *On the one hand, Father is not here to help me be strong. I do want to please my new friends. I want friends. I want to fit in in this new land. On the other hand, how can I forget [Shabbat]? How can I give up the beauty Father taught me?*



As Shabbat began that evening, Rose knew what she must do.

The next morning, afraid to tell her relatives of her decision, she left the house early in the morning and headed toward the park, where she spent the day resting. She sat on a bench and sang traditional Shabbat songs to the pigeons that gathered around her. Tears began to spill down her cheeks as she sang. She knew that this decision would cause her to lose her job and the acceptance of her relatives.

Shabbat Kept Rose

With the setting of the sun, Rose repeated the blessing for the ending of Shabbat, “*Baruch HaMavdil*,” and prepared to walk back. Each step was difficult, as she wondered what kind of reception she would find at home.

But as she approached the house, her cousin Joe spotted her and shouted in amazement, “But [I thought] you died, Rose! What . . . what . . . I mean, how are you here? Where were you?” He stumbled over his words in shock.

Rose didn't understand. But tears began to stream down her face again as she shared her predicament with him: "Joe, what will become of me? I kept Sabbath and lost my job. Now everyone will be angry and disappointed with me, and oh, Joe, what will I do?"

"Rose, didn't you hear?" Joe stopped her.

"Hear what?"

The story came out. There had been a fire at the factory where she had worked. Out of the 190 workers, fewer than 50 people survived. What if Rose had been there? Would she have been among those who died? God blessed Rose's decision to honor her conscience and keep Shabbat. In keeping Shabbat, Shabbat kept her.¹

God has given Shabbat as a means of special blessing for us. The word *Shabbat* means "rest" or "cessation," and in a world that is constantly working, God intends for us to pause on this day for rejuvenation. Jolie, one particularly diligent student, shares that as she returned to her religious roots, Shabbat freed her from the day-to-day cares of life:

"I was a study-aholic. I used to head for the university library at 10 a.m. Saturday mornings, right after breakfast. I would sit and study until 5 p.m. So the idea of having a day off when I could put down my pen and leave the library behind was liberating for me beyond belief."²



Wikimedia Commons

When we choose to obey God and honor Him above our own desires, He blesses that decision.

The Coming Shabbat Crisis

Beyond any of the physical blessings that Rose and Jolie experienced, Shabbat offers immeasurable spiritual blessings. When we choose to obey God and honor Him above our own desires, He blesses that decision.

Even so, keeping Shabbat is not always easy. It sometimes requires difficult decisions that go against our own inclinations and the wishes of family members. And though God blessed Rose's decision, He may not always deliver us out of challenging predicaments. What will we do when honoring Shabbat and remaining loyal to God results in the loss of our jobs or the alienation of people we love? What if our very lives are threatened?

Sabbath keepers know all too well what it means to be persecuted. Throughout the centuries,

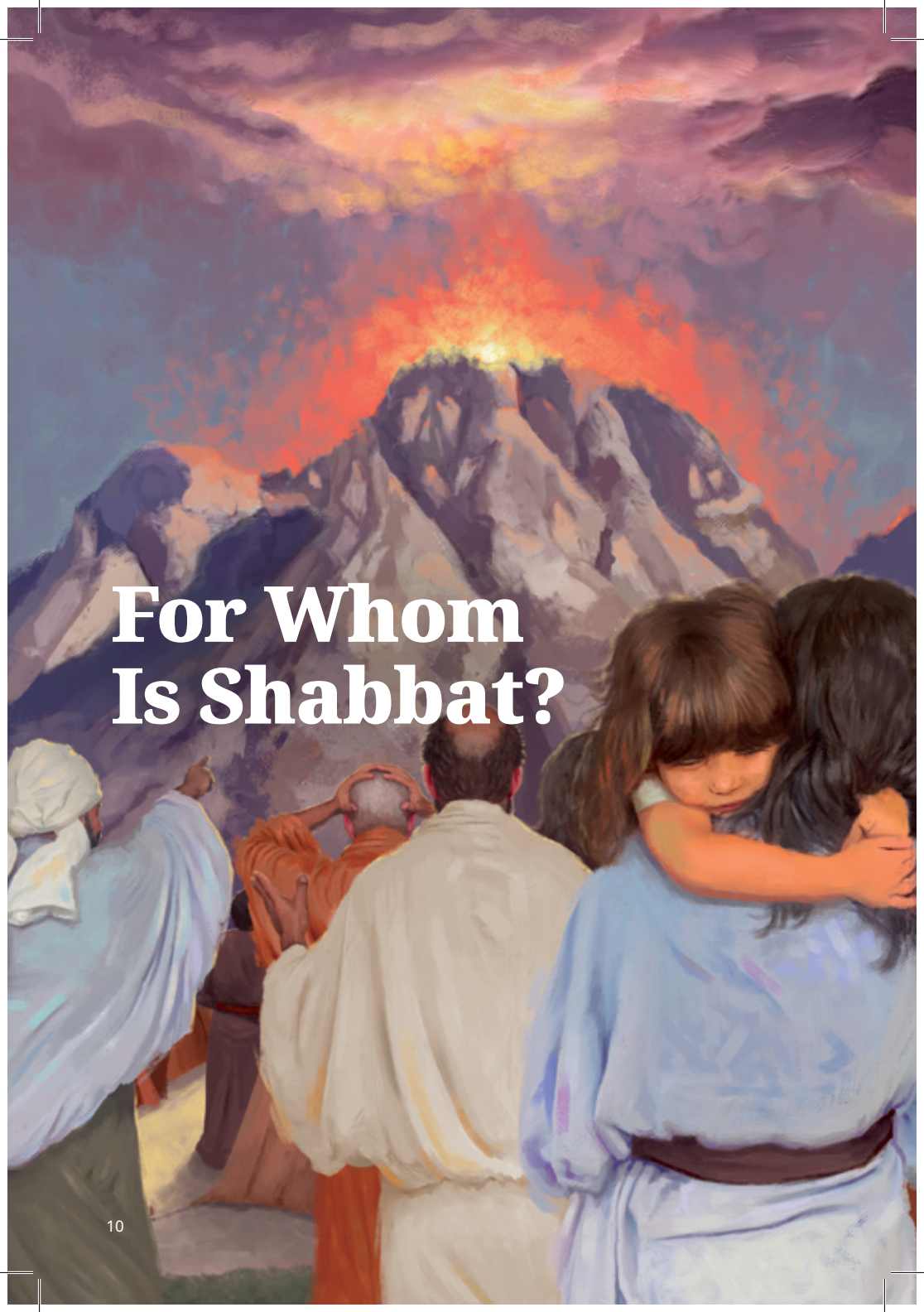
persecution, cruelty, and death have been serious realities for them. This persecution continues today, though it is perhaps less broadcast. But a time is coming soon when persecution will take place on a worldwide scale, impacting all those who choose loyalty to God and His Shabbat.

How do we know that this persecution will take place? And what will keep us faithful when all the world pressures us to violate our consciences?

In this magazine, we will learn about a religious-political power, prophesied in the Tanakh, that has sought to alter God's holy day. Its decrees will lead to a crisis for God's people right before the coming of the Mashiach. We will also explore the meaning and purpose of Shabbat, which will encourage us to hold more tightly to this sacred day.

References

1. For the full story, see Yitta Halberstam Mandelbaum and Judith Leventhal, *Small Miracles: Extraordinary Coincidences from Everyday Life* (United Kingdom: Adams Media Corporation, 1997).
2. Jolie Greiff, "I Took the Road Less Traveled—And Stayed There," Chabad.org.

A dramatic painting depicting a volcanic eruption. In the background, a jagged mountain peak is engulfed in bright orange and yellow flames, with thick, dark smoke billowing into a sky of swirling purple and blue clouds. In the foreground, several people are shown from behind, looking towards the volcano. On the left, a man in a light blue robe points his finger towards the mountain. Next to him, a man in an orange robe has his hands clasped in prayer. In the center, a man in a white robe stands with his back to the viewer. On the right, a woman in a light blue robe is hugging a young girl with brown hair. The overall mood is one of awe and contemplation.

For Whom Is Shabbat?



02

Thunder growled its warning. Lightning bolts appeared suddenly and then vanished just as quickly. Thick clouds covered the mountain that billowed with smoke and quaked as though shaken by an earthquake. It was Mount Sinai, and on this day God had come to speak to His people.

The people trembled and obediently backed away from the mountain as they waited for God's message. Fear and awe filled their hearts.

From the midst of the rumblings and quaking, God declared, "I am *ADONAI* your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus/Shemot 20:2). He declared the Ten Commandments, which would later be written in stone to remind His people of their unchanging nature.

One midrash suggests:

“On the occasion of the giving of the Torah, the Children of Israel not only heard the LORD’s Voice but actually saw the sound waves as they emerged from the LORD’s mouth. They visualized them as a fiery substance. Each commandment that left the LORD’s mouth traveled around the entire camp and then came back to every Jew individually.”

It then refers to the words of Rabbi Yochanan, who said, “God’s voice, as it was uttered, split up into seventy voices, in 70 languages, so that all the nations should understand.”¹

If the Torah was indeed spoken in 70 different languages, God must have wanted all the people—along with the Jews—to hear the message. And yet, many believe that the Shabbat commandment spoken that day is only for the Jews. Let’s go back to the Tanakh and understand for whom Shabbat was intended.

One of Two Sacred Institutions

Families gather around candlelit tables with freshly baked challah and grape juice spread before them. It’s Friday night, and those around the table prepare to recite the *kiddush*. It’s a familiar scene in a Jew-

ish home. One of the parts of the *kiddush* that they will recite is the *vayechulu*:

“So the heavens and the earth were completed along with their entire array. God completed—on the seventh day—His work that He made, and He ceased—on the seventh day—from all His work that He made. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for on it He ceased from all His work that God created for the purpose of preparing” (Genesis/Bereishit 2:1–3).

By reciting this passage every Friday evening, Jews remember that God blessed Shabbat at Creation.

At that time, the Jewish nation didn’t yet exist. Adam and Eve were the first people to celebrate Shabbat. Could it be that God intended for all humanity to enjoy its blessings?



God established two important institutions at the time of Creation. One of them was Shabbat, and the other was marriage. As Adam was naming the animals, he realized he didn't have a companion the way that each of the animals did. God acknowledged Adam's need for partnership when He said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. Let Me make a well-matched helper for him" (Genesis 2:18). So, He provided Adam with beautiful Eve and blessed their union. The chapter concludes with the following words: "This is why a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife; and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Thus, God instituted both Shabbat and marriage as sacred in Eden. Marriage was not only for the Jewish people. Neither was Shabbat! Both were given as special blessings for all of humanity to enjoy!

Shabbat Before Sinai

If Shabbat was indeed given at Creation, do we have evidence that others kept it prior to Mount Sinai? Did God's law exist from the time of Creation, and did anyone obey it? Let's consider a few examples.

Genesis 4:3, 4 tells us that Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve, brought offerings to God "after some time." A literal translation from the Hebrew phrase is "at the end of the days." We must ask the

question: at the end of what days? Up to this point, the only end of days mentioned in the Tanakh is the seventh-day Shabbat—the final day of the week. This would mean that Cain and Abel were bringing offerings to God in worship on that day.

Sadly, Cain and Abel's story didn't end well. Cain, jealous that Abel's offering was accepted by God and his was not, murdered his brother. Did Cain know that murdering his brother was wrong? He must have! God confronted him by asking: "What have you done?" (Genesis 4:10). Then, God placed a curse upon him.

The only way that Cain would have known that murder was wrong was if God's law, including the sixth command of "Do not murder," already existed at this time.

Prior to its declaration at Mount Sinai, God's law was already kept by His followers. Those followers included Noah. In fact, Noah even kept the laws of *kashrut*—the separation between clean and unclean, kosher and treif. When preparing the ark for a worldwide flood, he took two of every unclean animal onto the ark but seven of every clean animal, no doubt for the purpose of providing his family with food (Genesis 7:2). Noah kept God's commandments, though he was not a Jew. We can assume that he also kept Shabbat.

And we must not forget the patriarch, Abraham. Genesis 26:5



Keeping God's Law before Sinai

1 Adam and Eve were the first people to celebrate Shabbat.

2 Cain and Abel brought offerings to God at the end of the days (Genesis 4:3, 4).

records that God made a covenant with Abraham “because Abraham listened to My voice and kept My charge, My *mitzvot*, My decrees, and My instructions.” He was not a Jew, but He also kept God’s commandments.

For the Stranger Also

As we have already mentioned, a rabbinic tradition says that God, when speaking from Mount Sinai, could be heard in the 70 languages known at the time—symbolic of the whole world. The location of this event is significant:

“The Torah was given in public; given openly in a free place. For had the Torah been given in the land of Israel, the Israelites could have said to the nations of the world: You have no share in it. But now that it was given in the wilderness publicly and openly in a place that is free to all, everyone who

wishes to accept it can come and accept it.”²

By speaking His law in the wilderness, God was sharing it with all nations. We find more evidence for this in the Shabbat commandment itself:

“Remember *Yom Shabbat*, to keep it holy. You are to work six days, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a *Shabbat* to *ADONAI* your God. In it you shall not do any work—not you, nor your son, your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, your cattle, nor the outsider that is within your gates. For in six days *ADONAI* made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Thus *ADONAI* blessed *Yom Shabbat*, and made it holy” (Exodus 20:8–11).

The first word, *remember*, would have directed the minds of the people back to Creation, where God



3 Noah kept God's commandments, though he was not a Jew (Genesis 7:2).

4 "Abraham listened to My voice and kept My charge, My *mitzvot*, My decrees, and My instructions" (Genesis 26:5).

instituted Shabbat. At that time, there were no Jews.

But to be sure that He was clear, God included "the outsider that is within your gates." The Hebrew word for *outsider* didn't simply mean a visitor from within the Israelite nation. Instead, it referred to a foreigner. God intended the blessings of Shabbat to extend to the foreigners in Israel.

Isaiah/Yeshayahu 56:2 states it in these words: "Blessed is the one who does this, the son of man who takes hold of it, who keeps from profaning Shabbat, and keeps his hand from doing any evil." Here the word for "son of man" is *ben-Adam* or "son of Adam." God was calling all descendants of Adam, not just the Jews, to keep Shabbat.

A few verses later, the thought continues, "Also the foreigners

who join themselves to *ADONAI*, to minister to Him, and to love the Name of *ADONAI*, and to be His servants—all who keep from profaning *Shabbat*, and hold fast to My covenant—these I will bring to My holy mountain, and let them rejoice in My House of Prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar. For My House will be called a House of Prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:6, 7). Again, we see God including the foreigners with God's people in keeping Shabbat holy.

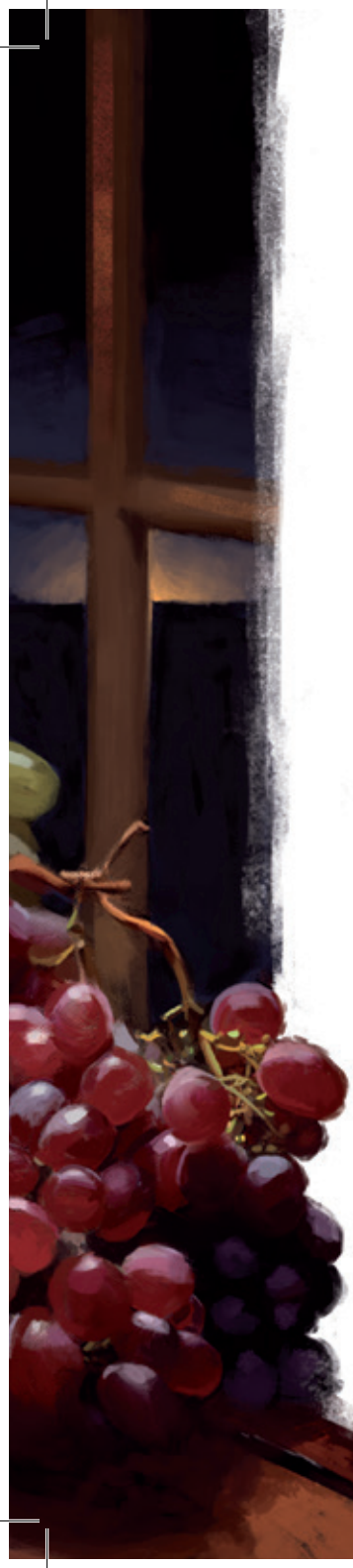
God gave Shabbat, this sacred institution, to all people at the time of Creation, and His people, even before the time of the Jewish nation, faithfully kept it. Today, He still invites "all nations" to partake in its blessings.

References

1. *Shemot Rabbah* 5:9.
2. *Mekhilta Bahodesh* 4, II 227.

A detailed still life painting depicting a Shabbat dinner. In the foreground, a plate of golden-brown, sesame-seeded challah is piled up. To the right, a cluster of red grapes is visible. In the center, a dark wine bottle stands next to a silver goblet. In the background, two lit candles in brass holders cast a warm glow. The scene is set against a dark background, possibly a window at night.

Shabbat's Special Meaning for Us Today



03

Every Friday evening, as Jews celebrate the beginning of Shabbat with a special dinner, they recite the *kiddush* before drinking grape juice:

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who made us holy with His commandments, has desired us, and has given us, in love and goodwill, His holy Shabbos as a heritage, as a reminder of the Creation. It [Shabbos] is the first day of the holy festivals, commemorating the Exodus from Egypt. For You [God] have chosen us and sanctified us from among all the nations, and with love and goodwill given us Your holy Shabbos as a heritage. Blessed are You, Lord, who makes the Shabbos holy.”

In this recitation, we find two blessings: a blessing over the fruit of the vine and a sanctification of Shabbat. It also brings out Shabbat's important meaning: Shabbat is a memorial of both Creation and of the deliverance of God's people from Egypt, and a reminder of God's power to make His people holy. We will explore this meaning of Shabbat further.

Memorial of Creation

The fourth commandment is a call for God's people to "remember." On Shabbat, God's people commemorate His creation of the world:

"So the heavens and the earth were completed along with their entire array. God completed—on the seventh day—His work that He made, and He ceased—on the seventh day—from all His work that He made" (Genesis 2:1, 2).

Today, evolutionists and atheists believe that the world came into existence through an explosion that brought together atoms and molecules. Eventually, over millions of years, the creatures we see today evolved. According to this evolutionary model, humans themselves started out as single-celled creatures that slowly developed over time. But what value does such a theory offer for human beings? It degrades us to the same level as animals!

On the other hand, if we believe the account of Creation given in

the Tanakh—that a loving God spoke the world into existence and formed humans with His own hands, as it were (Genesis 1–2)—how does that change the way we view the world? It places the highest value on every aspect of Creation!

God's creation of the world gives us another very important lesson. On the first day, He created the heavens and the earth and separated the light from the darkness. On the second day, He separated the waters from the sky, forming the atmosphere. On the third day, He formed dry land. Each of these days resulted in empty spaces: the sky on day one, the waters on day two, and the dry land on day three. But they needed to be filled!

Thus, on day four, God filled the sky with the sun, moon, and stars. On day five, He filled the waters with sea life. On the sixth day, He filled the dry land with animals and people.

But one more space remained to be filled. The seventh day was a space of time, and God chose to fill that space with His very presence. Whenever we enter that space of time in remembrance of Shabbat, we come into close connection with the Almighty of the universe. Though He is all-powerful and glorious, He cares for us and places infinite value on each one of us. Shabbat is an expression of His desire to be present with us and provide us with His blessing. And



just as He filled each one of the empty spaces in Creation, Shabbat reminds us that He wants to fill the emptiness in our lives too.

Memorial of Redemption

A passage in the Torah indicates another important aspect of Shabbat. Deuteronomy/Devarim 5:12–15 repeats the Shabbat commandment, but adds, “You must remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and *ADONAI* your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore *ADONAI* your God commanded you to keep *Yom Shabbat*.”

As the people of Israel kept Shabbat, they were to look back upon their time in Egypt and remember how God delivered them from

slavery. They would reflect on the many plagues that came upon the Egyptians while the Israelites were preserved. They would especially remember the night of Pesach when the destroying angel went through and destroyed the firstborns of the Egyptians. And, of course, they could not forget the parting of the Red Sea, which allowed all the Israelites to cross on dry land but drowned their enemies.

The redemption of the Israelites from Egypt symbolizes the freedom that God wants to provide for each one of His people throughout history. Redemption (*geulah*) is a very important concept for the Jewish people, and it means more than simply being freed from slavery; it’s about complete restoration.

As we keep Shabbat, we commemorate the freedom from sin—the redemption—that comes through God. It encourages us that He will someday soon provide ultimate redemption from this evil world so that we can enjoy His messianic reign forever.

Sign of God's Power to Make Us Holy

God instructed Moses to “speak now to *Bnei-Yisrael* saying, ‘Surely you must keep My *Shabbatot*, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, so you may know that I am *ADONAI* who sanctifies you’” (Exodus 31:13).

This injunction helps us understand another purpose of Shabbat: it is a sign of God's power to sanctify His people. The Hebrew word for *sanctify* in this passage is *qādaš*, and it means “to be set apart” or “consecrated” for a special purpose. The same word occurs when the Tanakh speaks of Shabbat being holy and of the firstborn or priests being set apart by God (firstborn: Exodus 13:2, Numbers 3:13; priests: Exodus 29:1, 21;

30:30; Leviticus 8:30; tabernacle: Exodus 29:37, 44; 40:9).

God set Shabbat apart for a special purpose, but His people have also been set apart for a special purpose—to be His holy people. Shabbat is a reminder of this reality. Because God is holy and Shabbat is holy, the only way that we can truly keep Shabbat is if we also are holy. Isaiah 58:13, 14 instructs,

“ ‘If you turn back your foot from Shabbat, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call Shabbat a delight, the holy day of *ADONAI* honorable, if you honor it, not going your own ways, not seeking your own pleasure, nor speaking your usual speech, then You will delight yourself in *ADONAI*, and I will let you ride over the heights of the earth, I will feed you with the heritage of your father Jacob.’ For the mouth of *ADONAI* has spoken.”

And yet, we must ever keep in mind the words of Exodus 31:13 that God is the One who sanctifies us; He makes us holy and enables us to keep Shabbat holy. What a gift!

***As we keep Shabbat,
we commemorate the freedom
from sin—the redemption—
that comes through God.***

A Time for Relationships

Deena glanced at her watch as an announcement came over the airplane's loudspeaker: her flight was being delayed for three hours due to poor weather at her destination. She knew that Shabbat didn't begin until late in the day during this time of year, but she wasn't sure she would arrive home before then with this delay.

After some time, another announcement informed the passengers that they would not be able to fly to their original destination at all but would be re-routed through another city. What was Deena to do now? She knew she could not violate Shabbat.

She was not the only Jew on the flight, though. She decided to introduce herself to one, a young man. He had already contacted a rabbi in their new destination, who extended an offer to any of the stranded passengers to come and spend Shabbat with a Jewish community there.

When Deena's non-Jewish seatmate heard her situation, he couldn't believe it. "Let me get this straight," he said. "You're getting off the plane in a town where you've never been with people you don't know to stay overnight with complete strangers?" His response made her realize how thankful she was for the community of people who keep Shabbat.

That evening, when the flight finally arrived, the Jewish passen-

gers quickly gathered their bags and found taxis to take them to the rabbi's house. They arrived just in time for Shabbat. They were warmly welcomed there and joined in the festivities: the lighting of Shabbat candles, reciting of the *kiddush*, and partaking in the Shabbat meal together. She experienced a sense of belonging and kinship with these people as they shared stories and fellowship through the evening and again the next day.

After Shabbat ended, Deena and her fellow travelers had to sadly say goodbye to their new friends. Indeed, the beauty of Shabbat hospitality brought them together and gave them a sense of belonging while they were stranded that day.

Looking back on the experience, Deena realized, "Miles away from my parents, husband, and home, I had accomplished what I set out to do when I booked my ticket: I had spent Shabbat with family."¹

Deena's experience illustrates the significance of Shabbat in building relationships. It brings families and communities together, allowing them to set aside the daily rush of life in fellowship with one another and deepen their relationships.

Furthermore, Shabbat offers us a set-apart time to cultivate our relationship with God. Like an earthly relationship that requires time to build trust and closeness, we must



spend time with God to get to know Him. How can we trust Him if we don't know Him? How can we love Him if we haven't taken the time to become acquainted with Him through the Tanakh and through times of prayer? Though we seek God daily, Shabbat offers a consecrated space of time to commune with Him in a deeper way than we do during the week.

A Foretaste of Heaven

A Jewish tradition says that *HASHEM* spoke to the people of Israel with these words, "My children, I have a great treasure which I will give to you if you accept the Torah and observe the *Mitzvot*."

Upon hearing this, the people asked, "What is the treasure You will give us if we observe the Torah?"

HASHEM replied, "It is the reward in the World-to-Come."

"Show us a sample of the World-to-Come," the people requested.

HASHEM gave them this promise: "I will give you the holy day of Shabbat, which is one-sixtieth of the World-to-Come."²

Indeed, the Jewish people embrace Shabbat as a foretaste of heaven. This day is to be not one of drudgery but of pure delight as we reflect on God's goodness and what

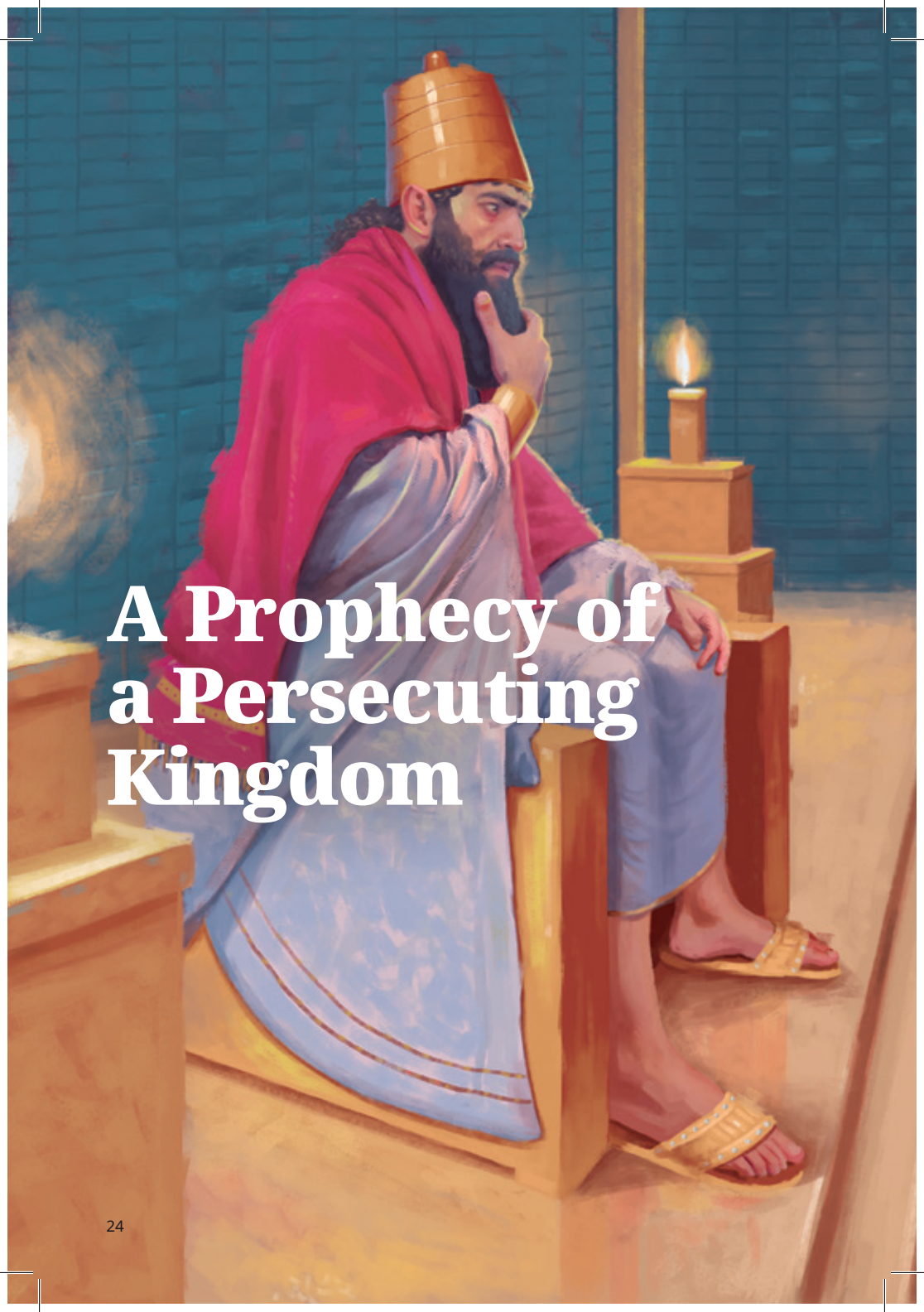
He has prepared for His people. For this reason, during the *kiddush*, the head of the home holds a glass of grape juice that is filled as full as possible to express the joy that fills each one who celebrates Shabbat. The time of fellowship and feasting is more special than anything during the week to symbolize the unique beauty of this day and to help God's people look forward to the celebration of Shabbat in heaven:

"For just as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, will endure before Me"—it is a declaration of *ADONAI*—"so your descendants and your name will endure. And it will come to pass, that from one New Moon to another, and from one *Shabbat* to another, all flesh will come to bow down before Me," says *ADONAI*" (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

With such depth of meaning, Shabbat holds particular significance for all of God's people—both Jew and non-Jew. Unfortunately, the enemy has worked hard to erase its importance throughout history. Before long, the keeping of Shabbat will again be in great danger. Now, more than ever, we must cling to this sign of loyalty between God and His people.

References

1. Deena Yellin, "Home for Shabbat," Chabad.org, originally published in *The Jewish Week*.
2. *Talmud, Berachot* 57B.



A Prophecy of a Persecuting Kingdom



04

Sadly, even among the Jewish people, many have lost sight of the true meaning of Shabbat. What has happened? A Bible prophecy in Daniel 7 reveals the answer. But before we can read Daniel 7, we must understand some historical background in Daniel 2.

Daniel 2 tells the story of King Nebuchadnezzar, who awoke one morning from a restless night and a strange dream. Unable to remember the dream, he called all his wise men, but none of them were able to tell him the dream, except for a young Hebrew man named Daniel. Daniel, through a revelation given him by God, told the king his dream and the interpretation. That dream is still relevant today because in it, God provides a sweeping picture of history and events that would “happen in the latter days” (Daniel 2:28). This dream will

become important in understanding a prophecy that relates to Shabbat. Let's explore it now:

"You looked, O king, and behold, there before you stood a huge statue—an enormous and dazzling image, whose appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was of pure gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly iron and partly clay. While you were watching, a stone was cut out, but not by hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from summer threshing-floors that the wind blows away. Not a trace of them could be found. Then the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:31–35).

What did this statue mean? King Nebuchadnezzar wondered too. And God, through Daniel, provided the interpretation.

Beginning with the first part of the dream, Daniel addressed the king, "You are the head of gold." Gold represented the luxurious empire of Babylon, which had reached its glory during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and which had

a capital city decorated with significant amounts of gold. Even Jeremiah/Yirmeyahu 51:7 described Babylon as a "golden cup."

But Babylon would not last. "After you another kingdom will arise, one inferior to yours," continued Daniel. Just as silver is inferior to gold, so the kingdom that followed Babylon was inferior in morality. (The Tanakh often uses precious metals to describe moral worth, such as in Zechariah 13:9.) The Medes and the Persians overthrew Babylon in 539 BCE and reigned until 331 BCE. This landmark event fulfilled Daniel 5:28, which predicted, "Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

The third part of the image was its belly and thighs of bronze—"a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over all the earth" (Daniel 2:39). Following the climax of the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greeks under Alexander the Great quickly conquered the whole then-known world.

But even Alexander the Great's mighty kingdom would not last. It would be succeeded by a fourth kingdom, which would be "strong as iron—for iron shatters and breaks everything—and just as iron smashes everything, so will it shatter and crush all the others" (Daniel 2:40). From 168 BCE to 476 CE, the iron monarchy of Rome held sway.



While you were watching, a stone was cut out, but not by hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them.

DANIEL 2:34

”

This kingdom would not last, either. And it would not be followed by another worldwide empire. Instead, “this will be a divided kingdom. It will have some of the strength of the iron, for you saw the iron mixed with clay. As the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. Just as you saw iron mixed with clay, people will mix with one another, but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay” (Daniel 2:41–43).

The Roman Empire began to crumble as the invading tribes of Europe conquered different parts of it. These tribes eventually formed the nations of divided Europe, which still exist today. Despite the countless attempts of these nations to unite into one empire—whether through con-

quest or royal intermarriages—God made it clear that “they will not adhere to one another.”

We must keep in mind that the purpose of the dream was to indicate what would take place in the last days. Here’s the description:

“Now in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up **a kingdom that will never be destroyed**, nor will this kingdom be left to another people. It will crush and bring to an end all of these kingdoms. But **it will endure forever**” (Daniel 2:44, emphasis supplied). The God of heaven would come to set up His eternal kingdom, bringing an end to all earthly kingdoms.

In Daniel 7, we find a similar timeline. It adds details about a religious-political power that has sought to diminish the importance of Shabbat down to our time.



Lion
Daniel 7:4

of the statue in the dream represent kingdoms. And Daniel 7, describing a dream that God gave to Daniel, is no different. This time, instead of a statue, God used four beasts to symbolize kingdoms (Daniel 7:17).

Here's an overview of the dream as Daniel saw it:

"I was looking in my vision at night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were churning up the great sea. Four huge beasts came up from the sea, each different from the others.

"The first was like a lion with eagle's wings. As I watched, its



Bear
Daniel 7:5

and the heart of a human was given to it.

"And behold there before me was another beast, a second one, like a bear. It raised itself up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh!'

"After that I looked, and behold, there was another one like a leopard. On its back it had four wings like those of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

"After this in my vision at night, I looked and behold there was a



Leopard
Daniel 7:6



Terrifying Beast
Daniel 7:7

crushed—and anything that was left it trampled with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that came before it; it had ten horns.

“While I was pondering the horns, behold, another horn, a small one, sprang up between them, and three of the first horns were uprooted from before it. And behold, this horn had eyes resembling human eyes and a mouth speaking boastfully” (Daniel 7:2–8).

Notice how this dream parallels Daniel 2. Just as the golden head of the image in Daniel 2 represents the Babylonian kingdom, so the lion with eagle’s wings represents

prophet Jeremiah, when speaking of Judah’s destruction by the Babylonians, referred to the kingdom of Babylon as a lion (Jeremiah 4:7) with horses and chariots that were “swifter than eagles” (Jeremiah 4:13).

The next kingdom is represented by a bear that is raised up on its side. As Daniel has already mentioned, the Babylonian kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and the Persians (Daniel 5:28)—two powers that united under Cyrus of Persia. The bear was raised on one side because one division of the kingdom, Persia, became stronger and larger than the other.

According to the succession of world empires, the leopard must represent Greece. “It was given authority to rule,” just as Daniel 2:39 said that it would “rule over all the earth.” It also had four wings, representing the speed with which it conquered the whole then-known world. Its four heads symbolized the four generals who ruled over Greece after the death of Alexander the Great.¹ One of these generals, Seleucus, established rulership over Israel. It was against this domination that the Maccabean Revolt occurred.

It follows that the dreadful and terrible fourth beast coincides with the iron monarchy, the Roman Empire, mentioned in Daniel 2. The Jewish nation keenly felt this oppression when it was under Roman rule.

We recall that another world empire did not follow the Roman Empire; instead, it was divided by tribes (kingdoms) in Europe. The same basic story with some added details can be seen here in Daniel 7. Notice that the fourth beast is “different from all the beasts that came before it” (Daniel 7:7). Here are some of those differences:

- › This empire was not conquered by another one after it.
- › It was divided into ten smaller kingdoms as represented by the ten horns (vs. 24). History records that ten tribes emerged after the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE: the Heruli, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Alemanni, Vandals, Suevi, Burgundians, Lombards, and Anglo-Saxons. Eventually, these tribes would form the nations of divided Europe.
- › This kingdom was fiercer and more terrifying than the ones before it.

In Daniel’s vision, a strange little “horn,” representing another kingdom, emerged, and uprooted three other kingdoms. Let’s spend some time examining it and its relation to Shabbat.

The Little Horn Power

Notice the characteristics of this kingdom:

- 1 It comes out of the Roman Empire (vs. 8).**
- 2 It comes up among the other kingdoms, but after them (vs. 8).**
- 3 It subdues three other kingdoms (vs. 24).**

- 4 **It grows into a large nation.** Verse 8 speaks of it as “small,” but verse 20 says it becomes “more imposing than its companions [the other kingdoms].”
- 5 **It is to be “different from the previous” kingdoms** (vs. 24).
- 6 **It has eyes resembling a man** (vs. 8), meaning that it had a unique individual at the head of its nation.
- 7 **It “speak[s] words against the Most High”** (vs. 25), that is, defies the true God.
- 8 **It wages “war against the kedoshim and [overpowers] them”** (vss. 21, 25). In other words, it is a persecuting power against God’s people.

Little Horn Power



It has eyes and a mouth (vs. 8)

- 9 **It possesses power for a period of three-and-a-half times** (vs. 25). In Daniel 4:22, the phrase “periods of time” is used to speak of years. Thus, in Daniel 7, one time represents 360 days—the number of days in the Jewish yearly calendar. Scholars who study the Tanakh interpret one prophetic day as being equal to a literal year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:5, 6).² Thus, one time = 360 prophetic days = 360 literal years. And three-and-a-half times = 1,260 prophetic days = 1,260 literal years. In the apostolic writings of the book of Revelation, the Jewish author John mentions the three-and-a-half times too, connecting it with a prophecy of 1,260 days (Revelation 12:6, 14).
- 10 **It thinks to “change the appointed times and law”** (vs. 25). This power is clearly defying God, and as such, is seeking to undermine the very foundation of God’s kingdom—His Ten Commandments, which He gave us from Mount Sinai. And what is the only commandment appointed by God that relates to time? Shabbat!

Even the wording of the Shabbat commandment shows us the unique, time-sensitive nature of Shabbat:

“Remember *Yom Shabbat*, to keep it holy. You are to work six days, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a *Shabbat* to *ADONAI* your God . . . For in six days *ADONAI* made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Thus *ADONAI* blessed *Yom Shabbat*, and made it holy” (Exodus 20:8–11).

God wrote this law with His very finger in stone (Exodus 31:18), and yet this power would seek to change it.

Identifying the Little Horn

What is this power? Let’s go through the little horn’s characteristics and compare them with history.

After the division of the Roman Empire and its conquest by the tribes of Europe, another kingdom emerged that conquered three of those tribes—the Vandals, the Ostrogoths, and the Visigoths—just as Daniel 7 prophesied. These three tribes covered parts of North Africa, Italy, and Eastern Europe. Who conquered them? It was King Justinian, the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire. This kingdom started out small, but it grew, uniting much of Europe



A representation of the Holy Roman Empire’s opulence found in the interior of the Theatine Church, Munich, Germany.



This kingdom was unique because it was not only a political power, but also a religious power.

under it in 532 CE. Its conquest of the three other kingdoms was complete in 538 CE.

This kingdom was unique because it was not only a political power, but also a religious power. Justinian declared the Roman church—the papacy—the “head of all the holy churches.”

As represented by the eyes of a man in Daniel 7, this papal power had a man at its head—the pope.

This power would also speak against the Most High. How does a nation or a kingdom speak? A

nation “speaks” through its laws and decrees. The Roman church defied God by enacting laws that conflicted with His clear commands. It even stamped out Shabbat observance among God’s people in places like India and Ethiopia.

The Roman church also had a reputation for persecuting the *kedoshim*—those who chose to remain faithful to God. During a period of history often referred to as the Dark Ages, the Roman church established courts of inquisition to question and punish those who held different beliefs from that of the official church. Many were tortured, imprisoned, and killed without an opportunity to defend themselves.³

This persecution continued all throughout the time that the Roman church had power—1,260 years (three-and-a-half times, Daniel 7:25). It came to full ruling power in 538 CE when it conquered the three other kingdoms. And not until 1798 would its power begin to decline when Napoleon’s General Berthier took the head of the Roman church captive.

How did this power specifically attempt “to change the appointed times and law”? A story from the fourth century CE will give us some answers.

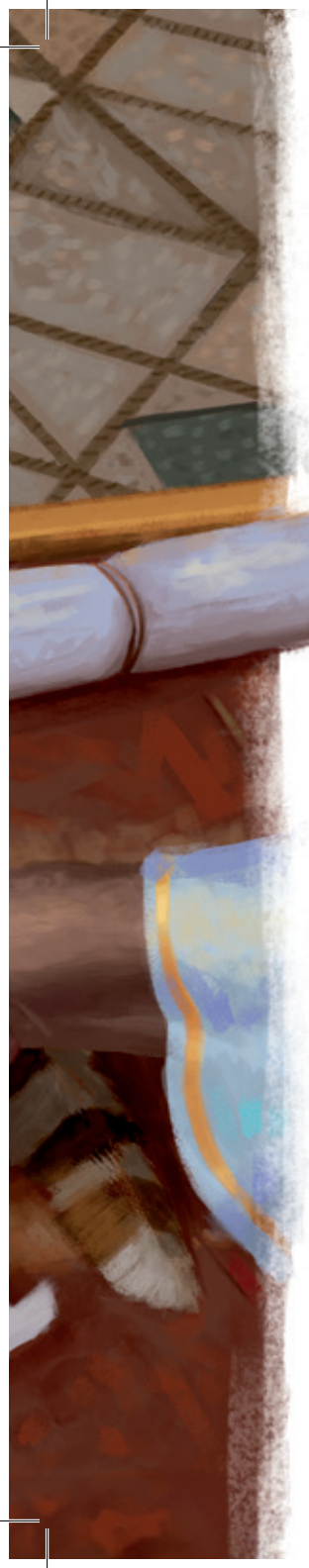
References

1. Joshua J. Mark, “The Hellenistic World: The World of Alexander the Great,” *World History Encyclopedia*, Nov. 1, 2018, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/94/the-hellenistic-world-the-world-of-alexander-the-g/>
2. Rabbi Hersh Goldwurm, *Daniel: A New Translation with Commentary, Anthologizing from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources* (New York, NY: ArtScroll Mesorah Publications, 1979).
3. John Foxe, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), pp. 78, 79.



When Shabbat Is Trampled

OMNES JUDICES, ET OMNES
HABITATORES CIVITATIS, ET
OMNES MERCATORES ET ACTI-
VES, REQUIESCANT IN VEN-
TABILI DIE SOLIS, SED SINT
AGRICOLIS COLENDI
QUOD SAEPE FIT, UT
DIES TAM AD SEKENDUM
RUMENTUM AUT VINEAS
SERERET UNDE NON EST PRÆ-
TEREUNDUM TEMPUS OP-
TUNITATIS



05

Constantine had a problem. With the death of his father, the army had made him the emperor of the Roman Empire—one that was currently falling apart due to the chaos of civil war. The next 18 years would be a challenge to defeat each of his three rivals and become the only emperor of the vast kingdom.¹

During this time of crisis, Constantine made a shrewd political move. In an attempt to unify the nation, he legalized Christianity throughout his empire. This decision would lead to many consequences, both for true followers of Yeshua and for the Jewish people.

After the time of Yeshua in the first century, the Jewish people who had accepted him continued to observe many of their Jewish traditions. They

also remained faithful in keeping Shabbat on the seventh day, which Yeshua himself upheld. During the first few centuries CE, followers of Yeshua—called Christians—experienced severe persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire. This hostility was known as the “Era of the Martyrs.” Ten periods of persecution occurred before the fourth century CE.² Jews also shared in this persecution, experiencing the destruction of their temple and city, Jerusalem, in 70 CE.

However, when Constantine legalized Christianity, persecution ceased. But the peace came with a price: compromise began to take place as Constantine melded God’s commandments with the practices of paganism.

Here, the parting of ways between Christianity and Judaism began to grow greater as Constantine decreed the following law in 321 CE: “On the venerable Day of

the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed.”³

To distinguish themselves from the Jewish people, Christians had been gradually moving away from keeping Shabbat to celebrating Sunday, the day pagans worshipped the sun. Shabbat became directly linked to Judaism as shown by the Council of Laodicea, which declared, “Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday but shall work on that day; but the Lord’s day they shall especially honour, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ.”⁴



And yet, this treatment of Shabbat was in direct defiance to the command of God. Nevertheless, the Roman church today still claims that it had the authority to make such a change. The Catholic Catechism states, “We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”⁵

Despite this time in history when many professed followers of God

chose to follow a human tradition instead of the commandments of God, some remained faithful to Shabbat. These faithful believers who continued to cling to Shabbat, including Jews, the Waldenses of Northern Italy, and the Celtic church of the British Isles, found safe places in mountainous regions to practice their faith. They endured the persecution that was prophesied to occur during the 1,260 years of the Roman church’s

An oil painting depicting a man and a young girl in a mountainous landscape. The man, with dark hair and a beard, wears a light-colored, button-down shirt and has a red sash or strap over his shoulder. He stands behind the girl, his hand resting on her shoulder. The girl, with brown hair in a braid, wears a dark dress and looks up with a hopeful expression. In the background, rugged mountains are bathed in the warm, golden light of a low sun, creating a dramatic and inspiring scene.

***These faithful believers,
who continued to cling
to Shabbat, found safe
places in mountainous
regions to practice
their faith.***

power because they were unwilling to renounce their loyalty and obedience to God (see Revelation 12:6).

Shabbat or a Bag of Gold

The story is told of a man who faithfully kept Shabbat each week. One Friday evening, as he was making his usual journey to the synagogue for worship, he saw something unusual along the pathway. It was a bag of gold! What fortune!

Suddenly, the bag spoke, “Pick me up, pick me up! I could change your entire life if you just took me home with you tonight.”

The man paused for a moment. But he realized that the sun was setting very soon and that Shabbat was about to begin. Murmuring the words “Shabbos, Shabbos,” he quickly continued on his way and arrived at the synagogue on time.

Later that evening, on his way home, he remembered the bag of



gold. Would it be there? Surprisingly, it still was! Why had no one else picked it up?

Again, it urged him, "Pick me up. Don't you want to pick me up? It could change your whole life. You could buy whatever you needed. You would never have a day or a moment of want again!"

But the man knew that he would not do so on Shabbat. He again spoke the words "Shabbos, Shabbos" and continued on his way.

The scenario repeated itself the next morning as he returned to the synagogue. This time, the bag said to him, "What kind of fool are you that you would walk by me for a third time and not pick me up? You would be able to take care of your friends, your family, everything that you wanted, all of those *mitzvot*, those obligations, that you've always wanted to fulfill. You'd be able to do so many things if you just picked me up!"

But the man's response remained the same: "Shabbos, Shabbos."

That evening, after the close of Shabbat, the man shared his experience with one of his friends: "You'll

never believe what happened to me. On my way to synagogue last night, there was a bag of gold!" The two men determined to run back and see if the bag was still there. As they raced back to the location, both were disappointed to find it gone.

The friend turned to the man and asked, "How could you have walked by it so many times and not picked it up? How is this possible? You could have had so much in your life if you had just picked up that bag of gold. And now what do you have?"

The man came back quickly with the words "Shabbos, Shabbos."⁶

Shabbat in the Last Days

In times past, many faithful followers of God have chosen God and Shabbat over wealth, security, societal acceptance, and even their own lives. They have been stripped of everything, but no one could take away their faith. No one could take away their Shabbat.

A time is coming when we will be faced with these tests again. Is Shabbat enough for us? Is God enough for us?

A time is coming when we will be faced with these tests again. Is Shabbat enough for us? Is God enough for us?

In his writings—as documented in the apostolic book of Revelation—John records visions that he had during his own experience of persecution and exile on the island of Patmos. His visions have many parallels with the prophecies found in Daniel. In fact, Revelation

13 speaks of a power, also depicted as a beast, that would persecute the *kedoshim*, resulting in a worship crisis during the last days. The characteristics of this religious-political power match the characteristics of the little horn power in Daniel 7. Notice the similarities:

The Little Horn of Daniel and the Beast of Revelation

Little Horn of Daniel



Beast of Revelation



With so many common characteristics, this beast, like the little horn power, must represent the Roman church.

Revelation 13:7, 8 describes this power:

“He was also permitted to make war against the *kedoshim* and overcome them, and he was given authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. All who dwell on the earth shall worship him—everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb who was slain.”

During a time of worldwide crisis—similar to the time of Constantine—the Roman church power will urge the making of religious laws to bring about unity. Very few will stand firm against this religious-political power.

But Revelation 14 describes the *kedoshim*, a small minority of people who will persevere in keeping the commands of God as a sign of their loyalty to Him (vs. 12). They will have a message that calls the whole world to “fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come. Worship the One who made heaven and earth and sea and springs of water” (vs. 7). Their message reminds us of Exodus 20:8–11, which commands God’s people to keep Shab-

bat because God “made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them.”

They will also warn people against receiving the mark of the Roman church, which will demand worship contrary to God’s command (Revelation 14:9–11). We have already seen that this mark will be disloyalty to God shown through the keeping of Sunday instead of Shabbat.

The *kedoshim* will honor God by keeping the seventh-day Shabbat, even when everyone else in the world has turned against them and chosen the mark of

***All who dwell
on the earth
shall worship
him—everyone
whose name
has not been
written from the
foundation of
the world in the
Book of Life of
the Lamb who
was slain.*** ”

REVELATION 13:7, 8



The appearance of the Mashiach is near

the beast's authority—Sunday worship. Though they will face persecution for their stand, they will be hopeful and stay true to Shabbat because they know that the appearance of the Mashiach is imminent.

The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation reveal that we are in the last days. The appearance of the Mashiach is near, and so it is vital that each one of us now decide what stand we will take in this final crisis of worship. Will we remain loyal to God and keep His Shabbat? The man in our earlier story

refused wealth because he valued faithfulness to Shabbat more. Do we also see the incredible value of Shabbat—as a day that commemorates Creation and redemption, that reminds us of God's sanctifying power, that looks forward to heaven, and that allows us to deepen our relationship with God?

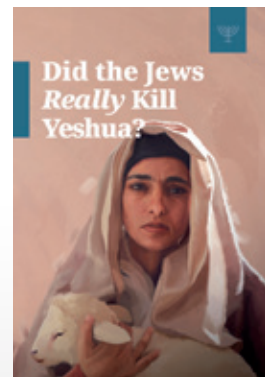
Take a moment right now to re-commit to keeping Shabbat as a sign of your loyalty to Him. Decide today that the author of Shabbat is enough for you, regardless of what you may lose as a result. He is worth it.

References

1. Kristin Rattini, "Who Was Constantine?," *National Geographic*, Feb. 25, 2019.
2. Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, p. 9.
3. Codex Justinianus 3.12.3, trans. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 5th ed. (New York, 1902), 3:380, note 1.
4. Charles J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church* (Edinburgh, 1876), 2:316.
5. Peter Geiermann, *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (St. Louis, MO, B. Herder Book Co., 1930).
6. Rabbi Leora Kaye, "Stories We Tell: The Power of Shabbat," *ReformJudaism.org*, April 4, 2019.



Further Reading



Ready to explore other magazines that answer some of life's deepest questions? Many more insightful and hope-filled resources await you on our website. **Scan the QR code to go there now.**





Scan the QR code
to learn more.

