

THE SABBATH IN LEVITICUS.

*Bible Study Guide/ **The Forgotten Day: The Seventh Day Sabbath/ 86-005, (Leviticus 19:30)/ Key Text: "You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:30)***

Lesson Objectives: To analyze the Sabbath texts in in the order in which they occur in the Pentateuch. Today, we are going to consider the Sabbath in Leviticus, then next, we will look at Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Lesson Segments:

1. The Sabbath in Leviticus 19:3, 30;
2. The Sabbath in Leviticus 16:31;
3. The Sabbath in Leviticus 26:2;
4. The Sabbath in In Leviticus 25:2–6.

Opening Remarks: Of all the commandments of the Decalogue, none is dealt with more frequently in the Old Testament than the Sabbath. That fact underscores the great importance of the commandment for the people of God in all generations. In fact, the author of Hebrews says: *"So then, there is still awaiting a full and complete Sabbath-rest reserved for the (true) people of God;"* (Hebrews 4:9, AMP)

The Sabbath should be no less of a requirement for the people of God today than it was in biblical times. But the problem, of course, is that for some, keeping the seventh day Sabbath is often painful, difficult, or inconvenient – some lose their jobs, some are persecuted/ imprisoned, etc. Many stories have been told of those who suffered for their faith, but one that grips my mind is a bold testimony by Mr. Gideon, who lost his job. Are we willing to do the same—to put all on the line to keep the fourth commandment? Listen to this testimony:

"Since the start of 2014, a bank in Tanzania has dismissed five Adventist employees, including me. Three more were fired last year. The reason: our decisions to keep the fourth commandment.

When I was called before the bank's hearing committee, I was asked to apologize for missing work on Sabbath and to promise not to do it again. Instead, I started preaching to them about the Sabbath. I said the Sabbath was meant to be observed not only by Adventists but also by every living creature. I said we needed to know the commandments because the Bible says whoever breaks one, breaks them all. I promised them that only death would prevent me from attending church because then I would be sleeping.

All the bankers were amazed and asked about the source of my confidence and happiness. Over the course of a month, they called me back to the room five times to ask me to vow to never miss work on Sabbath again. Then I was fired.

My case is in arbitration now. But I am very happy. Jesus is keeping me, and my faith is as strong as stone. I am always happy to serve the mighty Jesus, our Forever Friend." (Christian Nicholas Gideon, Tanzania).

[1] The Sabbath in Leviticus 19:3, 30.

"Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 19:3) "You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:30)

- Leviticus 19 is a remarkably diverse miscellany of apodictic and casuistic laws that exemplify a wide range of ritual and moral/social legislation and reiterate principles of most of the Ten Commandments. The unifying, organizing principle here is a comprehensively holy life that answers God's call to emulate his holiness (19:2).
- **Bases of holiness in the Decalogue.** Following the overall command to be holy because the Lord is holy, verses 3–4 reiterate several of the Ten Commandments: **respect for parents, observing Sabbaths** (v. 3; cf. Ex. 20:8–12), and **not turning to idols or casting metal gods** (Lev. 19:4; cf. Ex. 20:3–6).

The end of each verse is punctuated with the motivational refrain, "I am the Lord your God," with which we are familiar from Leviticus 18:2, 4, 30; this phrase recurs frequently throughout chapter 19. Interestingly, in the command to (lit.) "fear [i.e., revere/respect] [one's] mother and father" (v. 3), the order of parents reverses that of Exodus 20:12, indicating an intertextual chiasm linking Leviticus 19 to the Decalogue. [Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers, The NIV Application Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 335].

Verse 30 repeats the reminder to keep the Lord's Sabbaths (see v. 3). Observe the chiasmic relationship between these two verses:

- **respect** (*yr'*) mother and father
- **keep** (*šm*) the Lord's Sabbaths (v. 3).
- **keep** (*šm*) the Lord's Sabbaths
- **respect** (*yr'*) the Lord's sanctuary (v. 30).

In this pattern, the structural equivalence between mother and father (v. 3) and the Lord's sanctuary (v. 30), representing his worship system officiated by Aaronic priests, suggests a tight conceptual linkage between them. They represent divine and human authority that derives from Creation, which is continued through human reproduction.

Keeping Sabbaths encapsulates the core message of the chapter: The holy Creator makes his people holy (cf. Ex. 31:12–17) by teaching them how to emulate him. [Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers, The NIV Application Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 341].

[2] The Sabbath in Leviticus 16:31.

"This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever.” (Leviticus 16:29–31, NKJV)

In Leviticus 16:31 the annual Day of Atonement is referred to as **šabbat šabbāṭôn**. Also, in chapter 23 this day and various other annual days are set forth as “sabbaths” or “days of solemn rest.” For four of these the sabbath terminology used is **šabbāṭôn** or **šabbat šabbāṭôn**: the first day of the seventh month (**the blowing of trumpets**), the tenth day of the seventh month (**Day of Atonement**), and the first and eighth days of **the feast of booths** (23:24, 25, 27–32, 34, 36).

The first and seventh days of the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** and the day of **Pentecost** may also have been considered as sabbaths, though the Essene and Boethusian traditions in later Judaism interpreted the references to “sabbath” in verses 11, 15, and 16 to be weekly seventh-day Sabbaths. On all of the annual holy days, except for the Day of Atonement, **no “laborious work”** was to be done, but a stronger prohibition applied to that day: **“No work”** should be done (verse 28). [Raoul Dederen, *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology, Commentary Reference Series, electronic ed.*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001), 12:497–498].

“Up to this point, the narrative in regard to Yom Kippur has essentially dealt with the work of the high priest. These three verses now describe the demands made on the entire covenant community.

First, the laws of the festival are to be for all future generations (**‘an everlasting statute’** appears at the beginning and end of the verses as an *inclusio* for emphasis) and, thus, the timing of the celebration is allocated a place in the Hebrew calendar. It will occur in the seventh month of the year during the Sukkot feast.

Secondly, the people, both Israelites and aliens in Israel, are not to work on that day because it is a **‘Sabbath of rest’**—the term **‘rest’** is from the same root as **‘Sabbath’** and, therefore, it literally means **‘Sabbath of the sacred Sabbath’**. The latter is a superlative to emphasize the holiness of the day.

Thirdly, the people are to **'humble'** themselves. The common use of that word displays an act of submission, self-denial and self-mortification (see Exod. 10:3). It is also employed elsewhere to denote a day of fasting and prayer (Isa. 58:3; Ps. 35:13). The Jerusalem Targum defines it as a day of abstinence from such things as food, drink, bathing and sexual relations.

All these duties highlight the purpose of the Day of Atonement. It is a day when atonement occurs, and the people will be cleansed from sin and made pure. [John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Leviticus*, EP Study Commentary, (Darlington, England; Webster, New York: Evangelical Press, 2004), 223–224].

[3] The Sabbath in Leviticus 25:2–6.

*Leviticus 25:2–6 (NKJV) — 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give you, then **the land shall keep a sabbath** to the LORD. 3 Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; 4 but in the seventh year there shall be **a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD**. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. 5 What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. 6 And **the sabbath produce** of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you.'*

In Leviticus 25:2–6 sabbath language is again used, but the references are to the "sabbatical year."

The Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:1–22).

- "The primary emphasis of the Holiness Code in Leviticus is to underscore the holiness of Israel as a people chosen by God, who have been set free and set apart to the service of God. In this context, the festivals and celebrations of the nation are

presented. The people are required to keep these holy days in order to be a holy people.”

- “This opening section of the passage (25:1–7) treats the sabbatical year in Israel. The command for the Hebrews to keep it has already been given in the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 23:10–11). But it is only here in the Code of Holiness that it is designated a ‘Sabbath’. The reason that this term is used here is clear: [it ties this chapter to Leviticus 23:1–3 and the proclamation of the weekly Sabbath](#). **The concept of the Sabbath is foundational to the structure and operation of the universe, and it is to apply to the agricultural practices of Israel.**”
- “**The land** needs [a sabbath rest](#) in much the same way that **man** needs [a sabbath rest](#). Mankind may work the fields for six years, but there is to be no organized farming in the seventh year. The land is to lie fallow. One benefit of the practice is the reduction of sodium in the soil. But, most importantly, it is a practice that recognizes that all produce belongs to God and that he has given it freely to his people.” [John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Leviticus, EP Study Commentary*, (Darlington, England; Webster, New York: Evangelical Press, 2004), 323–324].
- “The counting of sabbatical years was to begin when the Israelites conquered Canaan and owned their own fields (Lev. 25:2–3). After seven sabbatical years totaling forty-nine years, **the Jubilee year is the fiftieth year**, beginning on the tenth day of the seventh month, which is the Day of Purgation (25:8–11).”
- **Fallow years.** “The sabbath of the land in the seventh year was “to the LORD,” so letting the land revert to its natural state carried religious significance. According to Exodus 23:11 there was also a humanitarian purpose: “Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave.” [Because there would be no sowing, whatever grew by itself from kernels spilled during the previous harvest would](#)

belong to anyone, human or animal, who needed it. Since there was no reaping, even of that which sprang up by itself (Lev. 25:5), the whole population would live off the land from day to day (cf. **gleaning** in 19:9–10; Ruth 2)."

- "Even with eating what the land would produce by itself, the question arises: "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?" (Lev. 25:20). God answers in the context of the last sabbatical period in the Jubilee cycle: **"I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in"** (25:21–22)." [Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers, The NIV Application Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 432, 434].

[4] The Sabbath in Leviticus 26:2.

Leviticus 26 provides a dramatic climax to the book of Leviticus, after which the concluding rules of chapter 27 are anticlimactic. It consists mainly of a series of conditional covenant blessings (if the Israelites obey the Lord) and curses (if they disobey his commands).

*"You shall not make **idols** for yourselves; neither **a carved image** nor **a sacred pillar** shall you rear up for yourselves; nor shall you set up **an engraved stone** in your land, to bow down to it; for I am the LORD your God. **You shall keep My Sabbaths** and **revere My sanctuary**: I am the LORD."* (Leviticus 26:1–2, NKJV)

- "The section is introduced (26:1–2) by reminders of two of the commandments of the Decalogue. An introduction to a new section of laws by rehearsing some of the Ten Commandments is known elsewhere in Leviticus (see 19:3–4, 11–12). The purpose of this is to underscore the foundational nature of the Decalogue for all law in Israel."

- “The present verse is a reiteration of the Second Commandment (Exod. 20:4–6). The reason it appears here is to highlight the truth that **holiness** and **obedience** require fidelity to the covenant and to Yahweh as sole deity. **No other gods are to be tolerated.** This prohibition is emphasized by the use of four different names to describe other deities. The first, **‘idols’**, derives from a root meaning ‘to be nothing’—these are objects of nothingness (see commentary on 19:4). The word **‘image’** comes from a verbal form meaning ‘to hew from wood or stone’. It refers to deified representations made out of those materials. A **‘pillar’** is a standing stone connected to the worship of Canaanite gods (Exod. 23:24). And, finally, the **‘carved stone figure’** is an idolatrous symbol hewn from stone (cf. Ezek. 8:10–12). A good example of such a figure was discovered in the excavations at Bethsaida, in which a **bull-headed deity** carved from a stone was found in the gate area.” [John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Leviticus*, EP Study Commentary, (Darlington, England; Webster, New York: Evangelical Press, 2004), 344–345].

The Promise of Blessing. *Leviticus 26:3–5 (NKJV)* — **3** *If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, 4 then I will give you **rain in its season**, the **land shall yield its produce**, and the trees of the field **shall yield their fruit**. 5 Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall **eat your bread to the full**, and **dwell in your land safely**.*

- “Before the blessings begin in verse 3, verses 1–2 introduce this chapter by reiterating the commandments against idolatry and for observing the Lord’s Sabbaths (cf. Ex. 20:4–6, 8–11). As an example of a prohibited idolatrous practice, verse 1 speaks of placing a **maškit** stone to prostrate oneself on it. This kind of stone is mentioned only here in the Bible, but on the basis of comparison with an Assyrian text, V. Hurowitz describes it as “a stone slab placed in the ground, possibly in a doorway, decorated with engraved divine symbols and bowed down upon, enabling the supplicant to kiss the ground with the

purpose of having his or her wish granted. We may translate it as 'decorated wishing stone.' "

- "The brief unit of 26:1–2 forms a structural tie with the same commands in 19:4, 30, where the theme is holy living because the Lord is holy. Staying away from **idolatry, keeping Sabbath,** and **reverencing the Lord's sanctuary** are basic ways that the Israelites can show **loyalty to him.** Conversely, violation of these commands will play a prominent role in bringing on them the curses and exile from the land that are so prominent later in this chapter." [Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers, The NIV Application Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 451–452].

DEVOTIONAL IMPLICATION: "You shall **keep** My Sabbaths and **reverence** My sanctuary: I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:30)

Behavior in the House of God. "To the humble, believing soul, the house of God on earth is **the gate of heaven.** The song of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ's representatives, are God's appointed agencies to prepare a people for the church above, for that loftier worship into which there can enter nothing that defileth."

"From the sacredness which was attached to **the earthly sanctuary,** Christians may learn how they should regard the place where the Lord meets with His people. There has been a great change, not for the better, but for the worse, in the habits and customs of the people in reference to religious worship. The precious, the sacred, things which connect us with God are **fast losing their hold** upon our minds and hearts, and are being brought down to the level of **common things.** The reverence which the people had anciently for the sanctuary where they met with God in sacred service has largely passed away. Nevertheless, God Himself gave the order of His service, exalting it high above everything of a temporal nature.

The house is **the sanctuary for the family**, and the closet or the grove the most retired place for individual worship; but the church is **the sanctuary for the congregation**. There should be rules in regard to **the time, the place, and the manner of worshiping**. Nothing that is sacred, nothing that pertains to the worship of God, should be treated with carelessness or indifference. In order that men may do their best work in showing forth the praises of God, their associations must be such as will keep the sacred distinct from the common, in their minds. Those who have broad ideas, noble thoughts and aspirations, are those who have associations that strengthen all thoughts of divine things. **Happy are those who have a sanctuary, be it high or low, in the city or among the rugged mountain caves, in the lowly cabin or in the wilderness**. If it is the best they can secure for the Master, He will **hallow the place with His presence**, and it will be holy unto the Lord of hosts.

When the worshipers enter the place of meeting, they should do so with decorum, passing quietly to their seats. If there is a stove in the room, it is not proper to crowd about it in an indolent, careless attitude. Common talking, whispering, and laughing should not be permitted in the house of worship, either before or after the service. **Ardent, active piety** should characterize the worshipers." [*Testimonies for the Church, (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1855), 5:491–492*].

THE GOSPEL'S VOICE: Think for a moment. Almost everything God instruct men to do, men do not do. Almost everything God says not to do, men do. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ says, "Swear not at all." Yet people routinely swear, over Bibles in courtrooms and about nearly everything else one can think of.

God says, "Love your enemies," but men hate their enemies and kill them, or destroy them in many other ways.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law," yet preachers declare, "You can't keep the law." "You can't keep the Sabbath" Christ did away with it because He kept it for us.

What does the Lord say to me today? **[1]** The Sabbath Command: *Exodus 20:8–11 (NKJV) — 8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."*

The Sabbath was instituted by God Himself in Eden (Gen 2:1-2). There was no need for God to spell out this command – before the Fall – because God's Law was written in their (Adam/ Eve) hearts/ minds (cf. Jer. 31:33; Heb. 10:16-18). God wants to write His Laws (including the Sabbath) into our hearts. The question is: Are we willing?

- *Ezekiel 11:19 (NKJV) — Then I will give them one heart, and I will **put a new spirit within them**, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,*
- *Ezekiel 36:26 (NKJV) — I will give you a new heart and **put a new spirit within you**; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*
- *Jeremiah 31:33 (NKJV) — But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*
- *Hebrews 8:10 (NKJV) — For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

The Sabbath is a memorial of creation. The Sabbath was kept perfectly by the patriarchs of old. But Israel had largely forgotten the Sabbath during their time in Egypt. Thus, God gave it again (Ex. 20:8). Furthermore, He miraculously revealed the Sabbath and magnified it—through the manna—as holy time. God wanted Israel to “remember” this the seventh day Sabbath that they had forgotten! **Why do men today want to forget a commandment that begins with the word “Remember?”** In a world that has forgotten it, God tells you—today—to remember the Sabbath. Will you?

[2] Second point: God wants us to reverence His Sanctuary. “**You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD.**” (Leviticus 19:30)

How the Sanctuary is to be revered? By not permitting the sanctuary to be dishonored by any profane use; By keeping it in decent repair and cleanliness.

The next step towards reverencing it is to love to be in it, and to join in its services: “How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” (Psalm 84:1–2, NKJV)

“I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go into the house of the LORD.” (Psalm 122:1, NKJV) “Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; **He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.**” **For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**” (Isaiah 2:3, NKJV)

ACTION STEP: What response do you think this lesson should inspire us to do? “**You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD.**” (Leviticus 19:30)

In what ways can we reverence the Sanctuary, or places of worship, and the Sabbath today?

[1] We must take care of the building (churches). Do the necessary repair, and furnishing such places for the service of God.

[2] We must keep the Sanctuary from all profane and common usage, and apply everything wholly to the worship of God.

[3] We must strive not to bring our worldly thoughts and improper affections.

[4] We must be attentive to decorum, when entering the sanctuary, while continuing in it, and when returning from it.

[5] The duly frequenting the worship of God in these holy places—*“My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” (Psalm 84:2, NKJV)*

“Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; They will still be praising You. Selah” (Psalm 84:4, NKJV) “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle.” (Psalm 43:3, NKJV)

[6] We must remember first and foremost that we are the Sanctuary: our bodies have become **the Temple of the Holy Spirit** (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19; 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16) As such, we ought to “offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5); and to “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1)

[7] **Authentic Sabbath Observance that Leads to Blessings:** “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From **doing your pleasure** on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor **finding your own pleasure**, Nor **speaking your own words**, Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And **I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.** The mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isaiah 58:13–14, NKJV)

Note: The doctrine of the Sanctuary and the Sabbath are interconnected. To understand the Sabbath, one must desire to know the Law of God –which was kept in the most holy place of the Sanctuary. In fact, these two doctrines will be the center peace of the Great Controversy in End Time, just before Christ comes. It would be beneficial for us then to fully understand what the Sabbath is all about, and obey God -- by remembering the seventh day Sabbath day, **“to keep it holy.”**

MY DESIRE TODAY. Check the Box which best reflect your decision today:

- I want to learn more about the Sabbath.
- I want to share with others the truth about the Sabbath.
- I want to keep all God’s commandment, including the Sabbath.
- It is my desire to obey the Lord by keeping His Day (the seventh –day Sabbath) **holy**, Ex. 20:8.

Have a Blessed Day: *“Moreover, also I gave them My Sabbaths to be a **sign** between Me and them, that they might understand and realize that **I am the Lord who sanctifies them** [separates and sets them apart].” (Ezekiel 20:12, AMP)*

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