



Anticipating Shabbat, Anticipating Heaven

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As a fourth-generation observer of the seventh-day Sabbath, I have had great appreciation for it as a student, and now as a wife and mother. This affection for the Sabbath only increased when our family had the privilege of living in Israel and I became aware of the profound love of the Sabbath that the Jewish people express. After all, four generations of Sabbath-keeping in my own family is nothing compared with the thousands of years that the Jewish people have been celebrating the glory of the Sabbath. Through their witness, even the preparation for the Sabbath on Friday has come to have a special joyousness. I resonated with the

suggestion that the Sabbath starts arriving on Friday afternoon, and by sundown it is all here. All the many tasks to ready the home have even come to enhance the anticipation for Sabbath's arrival Friday evening at sunset.

*“Time almost becomes
an ‘enemy’...”*

All week long, one continually juggles unrelenting responsibilities and demands while working. Time almost becomes an “enemy” as deadlines and obligations keep piling up. Yet, though Friday presents additional tasks to prepare for the Sabbath, these are

blessedly different for they remind me that Sabbath is just ahead, a day when I can luxuriate in time rather than fight it. And instead of being chained to a busy routine, I will soon be able to break loose and breathe freely again. As Francine Klagsbrun states it: “The freedom of Shabbat comes from the potential it holds to control time, perhaps the most far reaching form of freedom anyone can experience.”¹

The Sabbath also reminds me of my origin from the hand of God Himself, and that He has bid me and all His human children to celebrate this creation with Him each seven days (Exod 20:8-11). Thus the preparations for Sabbath

on Friday take on a remarkable flavor of preparing for the “royal delight” of the Sabbath—as God Himself expresses it in Isa 58: 13. The house is readied, the meals are prepared and aromas of favorite foods fill the rooms, reminding the whole family that the Sabbath is nearly here. Not just any dishes will do as I set the table for Sabbath meals. Only our best china and crystal arranged on the table, along with fresh flowers and candlelight, would be elegant enough to capture the regal nature of the glorious Sabbath hours.

And then, right before sundown, the phone is turned off,

so its incessant ringing which is necessary all week, cannot interrupt the peaceful atmosphere of Sabbath holiness as God draws near, fulfilling His promise to dwell with us. Sabbath candles are lit and shed their golden ambience. And our family gathers to again restore warm fellowship that is so hard to come by during a busy week when we all have such different schedules.

Thus each week ends with a glorious climax. Sabbath is not a day to collapse and recuperate. Rather it is the zenith of living. It is the gift of the Creator to this weary world; the oppor-

tunity to enter His “palace in time,” as the reknowned Jewish author Abraham Heschel writes. God has also promised to restore the resplendence of the original Eden at the end of time. Thus each Sabbath becomes a welcome weekly foretaste of heaven itself.

1. Francine Klagsbrun, *The Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath Day* (New York: Harmony Books, 2002), 38.

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How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.”

Dan 3:33 (Eng, 4:3)

Hebrew Wisdom

“The Rabbis taught that at the moment Nebuchadnezzar threw Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah into the furnace, the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave the instruction...to resurrect the dead.”

(Sanhedrin 92b)