

A Theology of Sabbath, part I  
 Rhythms and Seasons  
 6/26/2016

Evening and morning, day and night, light and darkness.

Creativity, activity and then rest.

Winter is stillness and quiet, darkness,

at least in OUR hemisphere.

But then comes Spring, and flowers blooming,

and Peeper frogs croaking, and birds migrating, and

songbirds singing, and mating, and feeding their young.

Every day starts in darkness,

then rolls into daylight and activity,

and then darkness comes again.

It's NOT frantic activity all the time.

There are bursts of action-

Forsythia, Cherry blossoms, red buds, dogwoods...

And in the fall,

The rush of fall color, then the leaves drop off.

Maples, Sumac, again... dogwoods.

But then things cycle down again.

I wonder why God set things up that way.

I think maybe it would be good for us to ponder such things,

when, because of electricity,

we can ignore the rhythms of Nature,

and Science now tells us,

we do so to our own peril and ill health.

It's not a new concept.

It's been built into the universe

since the very first week of Creation.

Turn with me to Genesis 1:1-5-

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

<sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty,  
darkness was over the surface of the deep,  
 and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

<sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

<sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good,  
 and he separated the light from the darkness.

<sup>5</sup> God called the light "day,"  
 and the darkness he called "night."  
 And there was evening, and there was morning—  
 the first day.

1. Why not just have all light?

It says that God saw the light, that it was good,  
 so why not just have light?

2. Why have evening and morning?

And why mention evening first? Rest, first. Why?

<sup>6</sup> And God said, "Let there be an expanse  
 between the waters to separate water from water."

<sup>7</sup> So God made the expanse and separated  
 the water under the expanse from the water above it.

And it was so.

<sup>8</sup> God called the expanse "sky."

And there was evening, and there was morning—  
 the second day.

(There's that "evening and morning" thing again.)

Can you imagine the magnitude of these creative endeavors?

It doesn't say that God created nonstop.

It says that he created,

and then there was evening and morning... interesting.

(What's up with that?)

Now day #3 is a very busy day in the Creation department-

<sup>9</sup> And God said,

“Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place,  
and let dry ground appear.” And it was so.

(Bam. There it was. No arguing, no confusion...

“and it was so.” I like that.)

<sup>10</sup> God called the dry ground “land,”

and the gathered waters he called “seas.”

And God saw that it was good.

(And where the two met, the land and the sea,

he called beaches, and he saw that they were VERY good.

Can I have an AMEN?)

<sup>11</sup> Then God said,

“Let the land produce vegetation:

seed-bearing plants and trees on the land

that bear fruit with seed in it,  
according to their various kinds.”

And it was so.

<sup>12</sup> The land produced vegetation:

plants bearing seed according to their kinds

and trees bearing fruit with seed in it

according to their kinds.

And God saw that it was good.

<sup>13</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning—

the third day.

Work, then no mention of work,

a hint that there is a break from work, a rest,

in preparation for the next big surge of activity.

So you get to the end of the week of Creation-

<sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.  
And there was evening, and there was morning—  
the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth  
were completed in all their vast array.

<sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished  
the work he had been doing;  
so on the seventh day he rested (Shabat) from all his work.

<sup>3</sup> And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy,  
because on it he rested from  
all the work of creating that he had done.

“God blessed the 7<sup>th</sup> day and made it holy.”

Do you have any idea how radical that concept was  
to the ancient Near East culture Moses was living in  
when he wrote that verse?

Kind of like today,  
when Chick-Fil-A gives THEIR employees off  
for a day of rest.

And with that, our culture goes nuts.

“That’s just CRAZY TALK! What are they thinking?”

A day for resting. How revolutionary.

Exodus 5:1-9

Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said,  
“This is what (Yahweh) the LORD, the God of Israel, says:  
‘Let my people go, so that they may hold  
a festival to me in the desert.’ ”

<sup>2</sup> Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD (YAHWEH), that I should  
obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD (Yahweh)  
and I will not let Israel go.”

<sup>3</sup> Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to (Yahweh) the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.”

<sup>4</sup> But the king of Egypt said, “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!” <sup>5</sup> Then Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now numerous,

and you are stopping them from working.”

<sup>6</sup> That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people: <sup>7</sup> “You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. <sup>8</sup> But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don’t reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ <sup>9</sup> Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies.”

10 plagues and the death of his eldest son later...

Exodus 14:5-7

<sup>5</sup> When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, “What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!” <sup>6</sup> So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. <sup>7</sup> He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. (Didn’t end so well, did it?)

Exodus 16:13-30

<sup>13</sup> That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.

<sup>14</sup> When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor.

<sup>15</sup> When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other,  
“What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. <sup>16</sup> This is what the LORD has commanded:

‘Each one is to gather as much as he needs.

Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’ ”

<sup>17</sup> The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. <sup>18</sup> And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little.

Each one gathered as much as he needed.

<sup>19</sup> Then Moses said to them,

“No one is to keep any of it until morning.”

<sup>20</sup> However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

<sup>21</sup> Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. <sup>22</sup> On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. <sup>23</sup> He said to them, “This is what the LORD commanded: ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’ ”

<sup>24</sup> So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. <sup>25</sup> “Eat it today,” Moses said, “because today is a Sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today. <sup>26</sup> Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.”

<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. <sup>28</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? <sup>29</sup> Bear in mind that the

LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out.”

<sup>30</sup> So the people rested on the seventh day.

(Who provided the meal?)

Exodus 20:1-8

And God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup> “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

<sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below...

<sup>7</sup> “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

<sup>8</sup> “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. (Why?)

<sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed

the Sabbath day and made it holy.

The Sabbath was made holy by God himself.

OUR job is to keep it holy.

What does it mean for the Sabbath Day to be Holy,

for anything to be holy? What IS holiness anyway?

For something to be holy means that it is special,

set apart for God’s use, to honor Him,

to be used in His service.

1. WE are called to be holy.
2. God's Word is holy.
3. And if you were a Jew, the Sabbath was to be kept holy.

The Sabbath was a gift, from God to his people,  
for them to rest.  
There continues to be evening and morning, every day,  
and God intended for there to continue to be rhythms  
of work and rest.

Pharaoh intended for there to be nonstop work-  
“There is going to be a drop in productivity. Back to work!”

So- who are the “Pharaohs” in YOUR life?

1. Folks at work? Supervisors, employers?
2. Competition at work from coworkers?
3. Is it weekend sports, after-school activities,  
church projects? (How ironic, right?)
4. Wanting too much stuff, and thereby taking on  
more financial indebtedness than you should?

Yes, there needs to be productivity;  
work is commanded, too)  
but has that become the new idol, the new God-substitute,  
that we can rely on our productivity,  
instead of relying on God?

Between jobs, commuting,  
taking classes at home on-line after work,  
after-school activities for the kids,  
when is the time for rest?

God built it into the schedule-  
when did WE receive the right to take it out?



Rhythms and seasons- plant hay, then wait.

Harvest hay, replant... then wait.

1. "Work hard, then play hard"... that's what I was taught.
2. "Better to burn out than to rust out."

There is truth there, but only half the truth.

(And what do we call a half truth?)

But God commanded His people to rest. (Top 10 list)

He built it into the way the universe functions...

Evening, then morning... so when do you rest?

How do you rest?

What are you willing to give up, to sacrifice,

so that the quality of your life could improve,

as you get back into line with God's plan

for your utilization of time, and for your life?

If you are an employer- who are you being a Pharaoh to?

You see, I don't think this is a frivolous conversation at all.

We talk a lot today about the bottom line.

Well, employer, supervisor, what's your bottom line?

Is it the almighty dollar, or serving

AND obeying the Almighty God?

Is it profits, or listening to the prophets?

God said to give your people a rest, give yourself a rest,

just like HE rested, after creating a universe.

Don't threaten to fire them if they don't work non-stop, 24/7.

**Ephesians 6:9**

And masters, treat your slaves in the same way.

(And how is that? Back up 2 verses.)

<sup>7</sup> Serve wholeheartedly,

as if you were serving the Lord, not men,

<sup>8</sup> because you know that the Lord will reward everyone

for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

v. 9 Do not threaten them, since you know that HE who is  
both their Master and yours is in heaven,  
and there is no favoritism with him.

**Exodus 16:29**

“Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath.”

(Who took it away from you?)

It's bad when an external Pharaoh

tries to take it away from you.

It's downright tragic when we “do it to ourselves.”

Today we will worship together, then go and do our things.

And then sundown will come,

and according to Jewish reckoning,

it will be evening and morning, the new day.

The new day starts with rest,

with quiet and receiving that gift from God.

Will you receive the gift of rest he offers,

and commands for you?