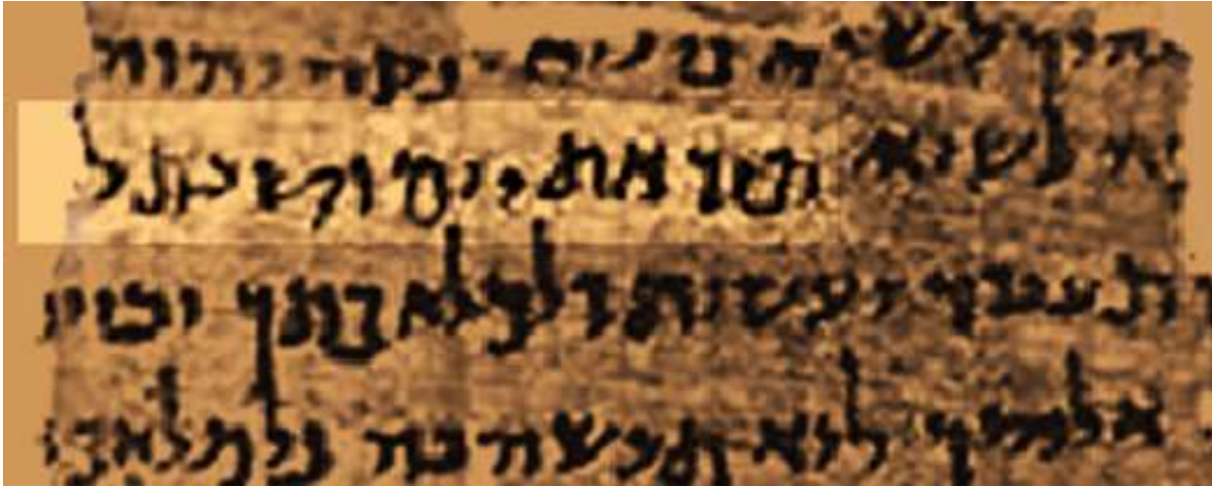


מדוע אנו מצוים לשמור את יום השבת?

אבנר רמו



A Papyrus fragment from the 2nd century BC, written in the Square Hebrew script. Containing the prayer starting with: “Remember the sabbath’s day, to consecrate it” (Ex 20:7). Bought in Egypt by Walter L. Nush in 1898.

In the Book of Nehemiah we read:

ואריבה את חרי יהודה; ואמרה להם, מה-הדבר הרע הזה אשר אתם עשים ומחללים [] את-יום השבת.

הלוא כה עשו אבותיכם, ויבא אלהינו עלינו את כל-הרעה הזאת ועל העיר הזאת; ואתם מוסיפים חרון על-ישראל לחלל [] את-השבת.

“And I quarreled with the nobles of Judah, and said to them: What is this evil thing that you are doing, and are profaning [] the sabbath day?

Did not your fathers did so? And our God brought upon us all this evil, and upon this city? And you are adding wrath upon Israel to profane [] the sabbath” (Neh 13:17-18).

However, the Hebrew syntax suggests that in verse Neh 13:17 the word: **בו** - "with it", and in verse Neh 13:18 the word: **בה** - "in it" are erroneously missing. In addition, the Hebrew syntax suggests that in verse Neh 13:18 the words:

ויבא אלהינו עלינו את כל-הרעה הזאת ועל העיר הזאת are a word disorder o:

ויבא אלהינו עלינו ועל העיר הזאת, את כל-הרעה הזאת and upon this city, all this evil.”

In the Book of Leviticus we read:

והיתה לכם לחקת עולם: בחדש השביעי בעשור לחדש תענו את-נפשתיכם וכל-מלאכה לא תעשו האזרח והגר הגר בתוכם;

כי-ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם: מכל חטאתיכם, לפני יהוה תטהרו. שבת שבתון היא לכם ועניתם את-נפשתיכם חקת עולם.

“And it shall be to you a statute forever; In the seventh month, on the tenth [day] of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and you shall not do any [manner of] work, the home-born, and the stranger that sojourns among you.

For on this day an atonement shall be made upon you, to cleanse you from all your sins; you shall be purified before *YHWH*.

Shabbath Shabathon it is to you, and you shall afflict your souls; [it is] a statute forever” (Lev 16:29-31).

It is not clearly stated here (nor in verses Lev 23:27, 29, 32) how the people are supposed to afflict themselves. It is also suggested that the first four words of this verses:

לכם לחקת עולם - “And it shall be to you a statute forever” are superfluous as this information appears in verse Lev 16:31.

While in several verses that contain the term: **שבת שבתון** (*shabath shabathon*) it was translated to Greek as: “sabbata”, in verse Lev 16:29-31 they translated it to: “(this) rest shall be Sabbath (to you).” The English translated these words to: “a sabbath of solemn.” While it is not known what is the basis of these understandings and if any of them is correct, it is clear that here the term: **שבת שבתון** is not related to the seventh day of the week. The words: **שבת שבתון** of verses Lev 23:32; and Lev 25:4,5, and the word: **שבתון** of verses Lev23:24, 39 are also not related to the seventh day of the week. It is not unlikely that in verses Lev23:24, ad Lev 23:39 the word: **שבתון** is a word deletion error of: **שבת שבתון**.

In the Book of Exodus we read:

ששת ימים תעבד וביום השביעי תשבת; בחריש ובקציר תשבת.

“You shall labor six days, and on the seventh day you shall cease; in plowing time and in harvest time you shall cease” (Ex 34:21).

Eleven chapters earlier we read:

ששת ימים תעשה מעשיך וביום השביעי תשבת למען ינוח[] שורך וחמרך, וינפש[] בן-אמתך והגר.

“Six days you shall do your works, and on the seventh day you shall cease; so that your ox and your ass will rest, and the son of your handmaid, and the stranger, will be refreshed” (Ex 23:12).

The Hebrew syntax suggests that here the word: **ינוח** is a vowel letter deletion error of: **ינוחַ** - “(they) will rest”, and the word: **וינפש** is a vowel letter deletion error of: **וינפשַ** - “(they) will refresh.”

We should notice that in verses Ex 23:12 and Ex 34:21 it is not mentioned that the seventh day of the week should be consecrated, nor that is also be called: **יום השבת** - “the sabbath’s day.”

In regard to the seventh day of the week we read in the Book of Leviticus:

וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר.

דבר אל-בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם, מועדי יהוה אשר-תקראו אתם מקראי קדש אלה הם מועדי.

ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי שבת שבתון מקרא-קדש, כל-מלאכה לא תעשו:
שבת הוא ליהוה בכל מושבתים.

“And *YHWH* spoke to Moses, saying:

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: *YHWH*'s appointed dates which you shall call them: holy convocations, these are My appointed dates.

Six days shall work be done; and on the seventh day [is] a Shabbath Shabathon, a holy convocation; you shall not do any [manner of] work; it is a Shabbath to *YHWH* in all your dwellings” (Lev 23:1-3).

However, as in the next verse we read:

אלה מועדי יהוה מקראי קדש, אשר-תקראו אתם במועדים:

“These are the appointed dates of *YHWH*, holy convocations, which you shall call them in their appointed dates” (Lev 23:4) it is suggested that the marked words of verse Lev 23:2 are superfluous.

While here (and in verses: Ex 31:15; 35:2 and probably Ex 16:23 the seventh day of the week is associated with the term שבת שבתון - “Shabbath Shabathon” who’s meaning is not certain, we also find in verse Lev 23:3 the word: שבת (*shabath*), but it is not clear whether this word is a word deletion error of: שבת שבתון - “Shabbath Shabathon” or of: יום שבת - “Sabbath’s day.” The Greeks translated here the word שבת not to “Sabbath” but to “Sabbata” a word they usually employed for the translation of the term: “שבת שבתון.”

In regard to these verses, additional information is found in the Book of Deuteronomy:

שמור את-יום השבת לקדשו כאשר צוך יהוה אלהיך.

ששת ימים תעבד ועשית [] כל-מלאכתך.

ו[יום השביעי] שבת ליהוה אלהיך: לא תעשה [] כל-מלאכה אתה ובנך-ובתך ועבדך-ואמתך ושורך וחמרך וכל-בהמתך וגרך אשר בשעריך, למען ינוח[] עבדך ואמתך כמוך.

וזכרת כי עבד היית בארץ מצרים ויצאך יהוה אלהיך משם ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה; על-כן צוך יהוה אלהיך לעשות את-יום השבת.

“Keep the sabbath’s day, to consecrate it, as *YHWH* your God commanded you.

Six days you shall thou labor, and do [] all your work;

And the seventh day is a sabbath [] to *YHWH* your God; [in it] you shall not do any [manner of] work, you, [nor] your son, [nor] your daughter, [nor] your man-slave, [nor] your maid-slave, [nor] your ox, [nor] your ass, [nor] all your beast, [nor] your stranger that is within your gates; for that your man-servant and your maid-servant will rest [as well] as you.

And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and *YHWH* your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore, *YHWH* your God commanded you to do the Sabbath’s day” (Deu 5:11-14).

The Hebrew syntax suggests that in verse Deu 5:12 the words: בהם את - “in them the” are erroneously missing, and in verse Deu 5:13 the words: ויום השביעי שבת ליהוה אלהיך are probably a letter and word deletion error of: והיום השביעי הוא יום שבת ליהוה אלהיך - “And the seventh day is a sabbath’s day to *YHWH* your God.”

The Hebrew syntax also suggests that the rest of this verse is a letter substitution, a word insertion, a letter and word deletion, and a word disorder of:

לא תעשה בן כל-מלאכה למען תנוחן אתה ובנך-ובתך ועבדך-ואמתך ושורך וחמרך וכל-
בהמתך וגרך אשר בשעריך,

“no work shall be done in it, so that you, and your son, and your daughter, and your man-servant and your maid-servant and your ox and your ass and all you beast and your stranger that is within your gates, will rest.”

In the Greek translation of these verses the words:

על-כן צוך יהוה אלהיך לעשות את-יום השבת of verse Deu 5:14 appear as: “therefore, the Lord your God instructed you to keep the day of the Sabbath and to consecrate it”, which indicates that the translator believed that in the Hebrew version of this verse that last word: ולקדשו was erroneously omitted.

We should notice that the Greeks, who did not assign a unique importance to the seventh day of the week, did not translate but just transliterated the words: יום השבת to: “the day of the Sabbath.”

However, this is not the first time that the words: יום השבת - “the Sabbath’s day” appear in the Bible.

Already in the Book of Exodus we read:

זכור את-יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל-מלאכתך.
ויום השביעי [] שבת ליהוה אלהיך: לא-תעשה [] כל-מלאכה אתה ובנך ובתך, עבדך ואמתך
ובהמתך וגרך אשר בשעריך.

“Remember the Sabbath’s day, to consecrate it.

You shall labor six days, and do all your work;

And the seventh day [is] a sabbath [] to YHWH your God; [in it] you shall not do any [manner of] work; you, [nor] your son, [nor] your daughter, [nor] your man-servant, [nor] your maid-servant, [nor] your cattle, [nor] your stranger that is within your gates” (Ex 20:7-9).

The Greeks translated the words: ויום השביעי שבת ליהוה אלהיך of verse Ex 20:9 to: “but on the seventh day there is Sabbata to the Lord your God”, which, as indicated above, suggests that they believed that here the word: שבת is a word deletion error of: שבת שבתון - “Shabbath Shabathon.” However, it is also possible that these words are a letter and a word deletion error of: וביום השביעי הוא יום שבת ליהוה אלהיך - “And in the seventh day, which is a Sabbath day to YHWH your God.” In addition, the Hebrew syntax suggests that in this verse the words: לא-תעשה בן כל-מלאכה is a word deletion error of: לא-תעשה כל-מלאכה be done in it.”

Eleven chapters later we read:

ויאמר יהוה אל-משה לאמר.
ואתה דבר אל-בני ישראל לאמר, אך את []-שבתתי תשמרו: כי אות הוא ביני וביניכם
לדרתיכם לדעת כי אני יהוה מקדשכם.

ושמרתם את []-השבת כי קדש הוא לכם; מחלליה מות יומת, כי כל-העשה בה מלאכה ונכרתה הנפש ההוא מקרב עמיה.
ששת ימים יעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי שבת שבתון קדש ליהוה; כל-העשה מלאכה ביום השבת מות יומת.
ושמרו בני-ישראל את []-השבת, לעשות את [] השבת לדרתם ברית עולם:

“And *YHWH* spoke to Moses, saying:

And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: but you shall keep My sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, to know that I am *YHWH* who consecrate you.

You shall keep the sabbath [], for it is holy to you; those that profane it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever does any work in it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

Six days work shall be done; and on the seventh day [is a] Shabbath Shabathon, consecrated to *YHWH*; whosoever does [any] work in the sabbath's day, shall surely be put to death.

And the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath [], to do the sabbath [] throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant” (Ex 31:12-16).

The syntax of these verses suggests that in verse Ex 31:13 the word: **ימי** - "the days of" is erroneously missing, and in verses: Ex 31:14 and Ex 31:16 the word: **יום** - "day" was erroneously omitted. In addition, the Hebrew grammar suggests that in verse Ex 31:15 the word: **יעשה** is a letter substitution error of: **תעשה** (e.g. Ex 35:2; Lev 23:3).

Four chapters later we read:

ויקהל משה את-כל-עדת בני ישראל ויאמר אלהים: אלה הדברים אשר-צוה יהוה לעשת אתם.
ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי יהיה לכם [] קדש, שבת שבתון ליהוה; כל-העשה בו מלאכה יומת.
לא-תבערו אש בכל משבתיכם ביום השבת.

“And Moses assembled all the congregation of the children of Israel, and said to them:

These are the things which *YHWH* commanded to do them.

Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day you shall have a holy [day], a Shabbath Shabathon to *YHWH*; whosoever does in it any work shall be put to death.

You shall not kindle fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath's day” (Ex 35:1-3).

The English translator believed that in verse Ex 35:2 the missing word is; “day” but this assumption is not supported by the Greek translation of this verse. The comparison between these verses suggests that here the word: **קדש** is a word deletion error of: **מקרא קדש** - "holy convocations.”

Nineteen chapters earlier we find:

ויהי ביום הששי לקטו לחם משנה שני העמר לאחד; ויבאו כל-נשיאי העדה ויגידו למשה. ויאמר אלהים, הוא אשר דבר יהוה שבתון שבת-קדש ליהוה מחר: את אשר-תאפו אפו ואת אשר-תבשלו בשלו, ואת כל-העדף הניחו לכם למשמרת עד-הבקר [].
ויניחו אתו עד-הבקר [] כאשר צוה משה; ולא הבאיש ורמה לא-היתה בו.
ויאמר משה אכלהו היום, כי-שבת היום ליהוה: היום לא תמצאהו בשדה.

ששת ימים תלקטהו; וביום השביעי [] שבת, לא יהיה-בו.
ויהי ביום השביעי יצאו מן-העם ללקט; ולא מצאו.
ויאמר יהוה אל-משה: עד-אנה מאנתם לשמר מצותי ותורתי.
ראו, כי-יהוה נתן לכם [] השבת, על-כן הוא נתן לכם ביום הששי לחם יומים; שבו איש
תחתיו, אל-יצא איש ממקומו ביום השביעי.
וישבתו העם ביום השביעי.

“And it came to pass that on the sixth day they gathered additional bread, two omers for each one; and all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses.
And he said to them: This is which *YHWH* spoke: Tomorrow is Shabathon, a holy Sabbath to YHWH. Bake that which you will bake, and cook that which you will cook; and all that rest you shall lay for you to be kept until the morning [].
And they laid it up until the morning [], as Moses commanded; and it did not rot, neither was there any worm therein.
And Moses said: Eat it to-day; for today is a sabbath to YHWH; today you shall not find it in the field.
Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day [is the] sabbath [], it shall not be in it.
And it came to pass on the seventh day, [some] of the people went out to gather, and they did not find.
And *YHWH* said to Moses: How long you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See, for YHWH gave you the sabbath []; therefore, He gave you on the sixth day the bread of two days; sit every man in his place, no man shall go out of his place on the seventh day.
So the people ceased on the seventh day” (Ex 16:22-30).

However, the Hebrew syntax suggests that the words: שבתון שבת-קדש ליהוה מחר of verse Ex 16:23 are a word disorder of: מחר שבת-שבתון קדש ליהוה - “Tomorrow is Shabbath Shabathon consecrated to *YHWH*.” It is also suggested that the words: הניחו לכם למשמרת עד-הבקר of this verse are a vowel letter insertion and a word deletion error of: הניחו לכם למשמרת עד-בקר המחר - “you shall lay for you to be kept until the morning of the next day.” Similarly, the words: ויניחו אתו עד-הבקר of verse Ex 16:24 are a vowel letter insertion and a word deletion error of: ויניחו אתו עד-בקר המחר - “And they laid it up until the morning of the next day.”

The words: כי-שבת היום ליהוה of verse Ex 16:25 were translated to Greek as: “For today is Sabbata to the Lord” which indicates that they believed that these words are a word deletion error of: כי-שבת שבתון היום ליהוה - “For today is Shabbath Shabathon to *YHWH*”, and the words: וביום השביעי שבת of verse Ex 16:26 were translated to Greek as: “but on the seventh day is Sabbata” which indicates that the translator believed that these words are a word deletion error of: וביום השביעי שבת שבתון - “and on the seventh day Shabbath Shabarthon.” Yet the words: ראו, כי-יהוה נתן לכם השבת of verse Ex 16:29 were translated to Greek as a word deletion error of: נתן לכם את יום השבת - “See, for *YHWH* gave you the Sabbath’s day.” However, if the Greek translation here is just a baseless speculation, then the first time that the words: יום השבת - “the Sabbath’s day” appears in the Bible is in verse Ex 20:7.

In the Book of Exodus we read:

ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, הנני ממטיר לכם לחם מן-השמים; ויצא העם ולקטו דבר-יום ביום, למען אנסנו הילך בתורתך אם-לא.

והיה ביום הששי והכינו את אשר-יביאו; והיה משנה על אשר-ילקטו יום יום.

“And *YHWH* said to Moses: Behold, I will shower for you bread from heaven; and the people shall go out and will gather a day's portion every day, that I may try them, whether they will walk in My law, or not.

And it shall come to pass that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily” (Ex 16:4-5).

ששת ימים תלקטוהו; וביום השביעי שבת, לא יהיה-בו.
ויהי ביום השביעי יצאו מן-העם ללקט; ולא מצאו

“You shall gather it Six days; but on the seventh day [is the] sabbath, it shall not be in it. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that some of the people went out to gather, but they did not find” (Ex 16:26-27).

However, if the words: **וביום השביעי שבת** of verse Ex 16:26 are a letter and a word deletion error of: **וביום השביעי יום השבת** - “and on the seventh day, the Sabbath’s day”, then the reasoning for keeping the Sabbath’s day is to remind the people that they failed God’s trial.

Yet in the Book of Deuteronomy we read:

וזכרת כי עבד היית בארץ מצרים ויצאך יהוה אלהיך משם ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה; על-כן צוך יהוה אלהיך לעשות את-יום השבת.

“And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and *YHWH* your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore, *YHWH* your God commanded you to do the sabbath day” (Deu 5:14).

In chapter 31 of the Book of Exodus we are told that the reason for keeping the Sabbath days is: **כי אות הוא ביני וביניכם לדעת כי אני יהוה מקדשכם** - “For it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, to know that I am *YHWH* who consecrate you” (Ex 31:13; see also: Eze 20:12).

In the Book of Ezekiel we read:

אני יהוה אלהיכם, בחקותי לכו; ואת-משפטי שמרו ועשו אותם.
ואת-שבתותי קדשו; והיו לאות ביני וביניכם לדעת כי אני יהוה אלהיכם.

“I am *YHWH* your God; walk in My statutes, and keep My ordinances, and do them; And consecrate My sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between Me and you, to know that I am *YHWH* your God” (Eze 20:19-20).

In chapter 31 of the Book of Exodus we are also told:

ביני ובין בני ישראל אות הוא לעלם: כי-ששת ימים עשה יהוה את-השמים ואת-הארץ וביום השביעי שבת וינפש.

“It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days *YHWH* made the heaven and the earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested” (Ex 31:17).

In the Book of Genesis we read:

ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה; וישבת ביום השביעי מכל-מלאכתו אשר עשה.
ויברך אלהים את-יום השביעי ויקדש אתו: כי בו שבת מכל-מלאכתו אשר-ברא אלהים לעשות.

“And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.

And God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it; for in it He rested from all His work which God in creating had made” (Gen 2:2-3).

As in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis we are told that God completed the creation of the sky and the earth and all their contents in six days, the Greek translator wrote that God finished his work on the sixed day, which indicates that he believed that here the words: **ביום השביעי** - “on the seventh day” are erroneous. However, it is also possible that here the words: **ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה** are a letter deletion and a letter substitution error of: **ויחדל אלהים ביום השביעי מהמלאכה אשר עשה** - “**And on the seventh day God ceased from doing the work which He had made.**”

If this understanding is correct, then the second part of verse Gen 2:2 is superfluous, and was probably inserted by a late scribe intending to clarify the first part of this verse which he believed to be corrupt. It is likewise suggested that the second half of verse Gen 2:3 is also superfluous.

However, it is not clear why God blessed the seventh day rather than the six days of creation. We should also notice that here, nor anywhere else in the Book of Genesis (and the first 19 chapters of the Book of Exodus), the seventh day of the week is called: **יום השבת** - “**the Sabbath’s day.**”

It is therefore possible that verse Gen 2:3 should be read as:

ויברך אלהים ביום השביעי את מלאכתו אשר-ברא ויקדש אתה:

“And God blessed on the seventh day His work which He created and He consecrated it.”

We may conclude that the biblical writers (or the late scribes) of the Pentateuch and of the Book of Ezekiel had a variety of reasoning for the command: to concertante the day of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath’s day is also mentioned in the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos, Psalms, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, but in none of these books the reasoning for keeping the day of the Sabbath is mentioned.