

## Rediscovering the Story of the Old Testament – Session 2 Lesson 7

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## Main Idea

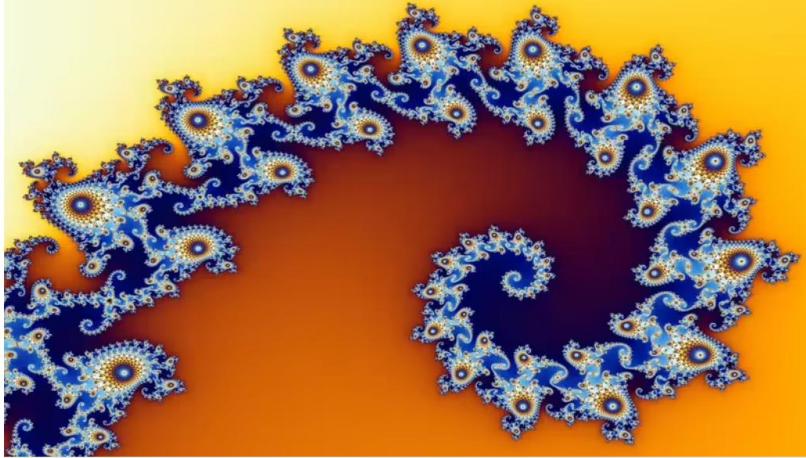
See how to use the Sabbath Pattern as part of many patterns that repeat through the Old Testament

## Exercise

How does a fractal describe the patterns in the TN

## Core questions

- How does Yahweh provide us with patterns of space and time to help us draw near to him?



This partial view of the Mandelbrot set, possibly the world's most famous fractal, shows step four of a zoom sequence: The central endpoint of the "seahorse tail" is also a Misiurewicz point. WOLFGANG BEYER/(CC BY-SA 3.0)

## Sabbath

## Pattern

### Patterns of the place where Yahweh intended to be with his people

While the first people were still in the Garden of Eden, God merely “walked” among them. If all of cosmos was the temple where God would be with his people, then the Garden was the sanctuary within that temple. The rebellion caused God’s people to be put outside that sanctuary, but God would use the Garden of Eden as a pattern to create other spaces where God would be with His people.

Throughout scripture we can find the images of Eden in the ark,<sup>1</sup> in the tabernacle and the temple,<sup>2</sup> in Jesus,<sup>3</sup> in our bodies,<sup>4</sup> in the church.<sup>5</sup> Then finally, we will see, that all those patterns point to the moment when all of creation is restored and the whole of heaven and earth finally and fully joined together and the Kingdom of God is fully complete.<sup>6</sup>

### Patterns of the time when Yahweh intended to be with his people

Scripture points to more than the place where God will dwell with us, it also points to what we expect to do when we are in that place. This perspective helps us to understand the Genesis 1 creation account. Why would the all-powerful God who could have ‘created’ or ‘dedicated’ everything at once and who never gets tired take 6 days for the

<sup>1</sup> Powell, Mark Allen. “Noah’s Ark as Mosaic Tabernacle”; Holloway, Steven W. “What Ship Goes There: The Flood Narratives in the Gilgamesh Epic and Genesis Considered in Light of Ancient Near East Temple Ideology” *James Madison University* 1991; Triolo, Joseph. “The Tabernacle as Structurally Akin to Noah’s Ark: Considering Cult, Cosmic Mountain, and Diluvial Arks in Light of the Gilgamesh epic and the Hebrew Bible” *SBL Pacific Coast Regional Conference* 2019

<sup>2</sup> Morrow, Jeff. “Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3” *Seton Hall University*

<sup>3</sup> John 2:21

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor 6:19-20

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 2:19-22

<sup>6</sup> Rev 21:22

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creation/dedication and then, on an unending 7<sup>th</sup> day, take a rest.<sup>7</sup> That structure was not meant to indicate God's needs or restrictions but was meant to create a template for us, a template we can use to find other similar patterns in scripture that will help us discover God's revelation to us. There are several patterns to be found in the creation account of Genesis 1.

### Stopping to dwell

All the meanings associated with the 7th day point to the 7th day as the culminating day of creation/dedication and the temple/cosmos was now complete. Genesis 2:2 says that God stopped (Heb. "shabbat") from all his work. Shabbat means to stop, to cease. In Exodus 20, the commandment given to the Israelites was for them to remember the 7th day when God ceased from his "work."

The 7th day of creation is called the "Sabbath" which means to stop or to cease. The commandment says that God stopped his work so that he could "nuach" and that we should do the same. "Nuach" is typically translated as "rest," but it also means to settle down and to dwell in. Which means that when God "stopped" his work of dedicating the cosmos as the temple for him and his image-bearers, it was so he could then settle into it and to use the cosmos for his intended purpose. The purpose of the cosmos was to be a place where God to be with his people for the rest of eternity.

The purpose of the commandment given to the Israelites about the Sabbath was to create a schedule where every 7th day the normal work was to stop so that the Israelites could dedicate their time to be with God. The Sabbath was a reminder to the Israelites that they live and work in order to be with God, they did not live to work. Not working on the Sabbath also served as a reminder that they were dependent on God for their provision.

The Sabbath, then became a temple in time where the Israelites carved time out of the week to be dedicated to being with the Creator to help them remember their purpose for being. The purpose of stopping their normal routines ("shabbat") was so that they could take time to rest in the presence of God ("nuach").

When the commandments were repeated later in Deuteronomy 5, the Israelites were given another thing to remember on the Sabbath. They were to remember that they were slaves in the land of Egypt, but that Yahweh brought them out of there. So, there were two memories to be invoked on the Sabbath, memory of the purpose of creation and memory of God's provision of freedom by bringing the Israelites out of slavery. And yet another memory would be invoked later, when Sabbath could be a time of remembering how God would release them from captivity in Babylon.

Both of the Sabbath memories 1) evoke the responsibilities given to God's image-bearers at the beginning, to settle into the garden God provided with the responsibilities to fill the earth, to rule, subdue, and have dominion over other creatures, to serve (work) and oversee (guard) the garden, and 2) evoke the consequences of not trusting God which changed their service to a garden protected by God to a slavery of a land that resisted their efforts. The work that we were designed to do, to aid God as co-regents in the world was meant to be enjoyable. We originally were to serve the garden which was provided as a gift of God. But in the post-exile from Eden work, we have to work the ground until it kills us from the hard labor and the sweat. As God said to Cain, "The ground will only with difficulty, give you its yield." (CSB)

### The Sabbath of Yahweh

The Commandments in both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 say that "the seventh day is a Sabbath of Yahweh." The day belongs to him. All things and all time belong to Yahweh. The weekly celebration of the Sabbath is an opportunity for the Israelites to renounce their ownership of their possessions and their time, everything they have is a gift from Yahweh. It is in that spirit that the Israelites take the opportunity to refrain from their own pleasures.

The goal of Shabbat (to stop) is not just to stop but to Nuach (to dwell in the presence of Yahweh). The point of the cosmos is to have a place for Yahweh's image-bearers to be with Him. The seventh day of creation was intended to be a prolonged period of experiencing God's love by responding in love and obedience. When Yahweh saw his image-bearers rebel against him, he continued to show His love by implementing his plan to restore them to Himself.

To that end, Yahweh called Abraham through whom He would bless the world. From Abraham, Yahweh created a family which then became the nation, Israel, through which the Son of God would become born as the God-man, the Messiah.

<sup>7</sup> The Genesis 1:2-2:3 creation week is most fruitfully read as a "calendar narrative." It is a special kind of historical narrative in which historical events are given the dates of a festival observance (sabbath observance in the case of the creation week), without regard for the timing of the original occurrence ... Genesis 1:1-2:3 provides a narration of creation events, but the timing and details of its telling are transparently "remapped" to the cadence and themes of Israel's weekly sabbath festival." LeFebvre, Michael. "The Liturgy of Creation" Intervarsity Press 2019

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Israel therefore became the **Covenant** people who were given the Law and the Promises through which God would bless the entire world. After many years, when no one in the nation of Israel was able to fulfill the Law, the God-man, the Messiah came in order to fulfill the law, making it possible for not just Israel, but all of God's image-bearers to be restored to Himself and to finally experience the opportunity to dwell at rest with Him.

The Sabbath was given to Israel as an **opportunity** to **grow** into the trust and obedience that are necessary for humans to experience nuach with God, and also to **anticipate** the ultimate Sabbath rest when God restores all of Creation to Himself.

But until the time of **final** restoration, Sabbath practices are meant to be **inconvenient**. The Sabbath discipline of voluntary inconvenience helps to **endure** the inconveniences imposed by circumstances or by other people. The practice of voluntary inconvenience reminds us that we are not **masters** of our lives or time, that we need God's provision, that our "time" does not, in fact, belong to us, and that our labors are not what actually keeps us alive.

## The Seven Days of Creation as a pattern

The creation event, that is the creation of the universe as a temple, provided a paradigm for the creation of other temples:

Creation and Sabbath (GEN 1:31-2:3)	Tabernacle Instructions (EXOD 25-31)	Completion of the Tabernacle (EXOD 39-40):	Jerusalem Temple Completion 1 KINGS 6-8
Seven days open with divine command: “And God said...”  Day 1 - 1:5 Day 2 - 1:8 Day 3 - 1:13 Day 4 - 1:19 Day 5 - 1:23 Day 6 - 1:31 Day 7 - Gen 2:1-3  SABBATH	Seven speeches open with divine command: “And YHWH spoke to Moses...”  Speech 1 - Exod 25:1 Speech 2 - Exod 30:11 Speech 3 - Exod 30:17 Speech 4 - Exod 30:22 Speech 5 - Exod 30:34 Speech 6 - Exod 31:1 Speech 7 - Exod 31:12  SABBATH	Seven acts of obedience to the divine command complete tabernacle: “And Moses did ... just as YHWH commanded Moses.”  Act 1 - Exod 40:19 Act 2 - Exod 40:21 Act 3 - Exod 40:23 Act 4 - Exod 40:25 Act 5 - Exod 40:27 Act 6 - Exod 40:29 Act 7 - Exod 40:32-35  DIVINE REST	Seven petitions of Solomon upon the completion of the temple: “Blessed be Yahweh who spoke to my father David.”  Petition 1 - 1 Kgs 8:31-32 Petition 2 - 1 Kgs 8:33-34 Petition 3 - 1 Kgs 8:35-37a Petition 4 - 1 Kgs 8:37b-40 Petition 5 - 1 Kgs 8:41-43 Petition 6 - 1 Kgs 8:44-45 Petition 7 - 1 Kgs 8:46-53  SEVEN-DAY FEASTS
<b>Repeated words</b>			
Seventh day culminates in Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3)	Seventh speech emphasizes the “sign of Sabbath” (Exod 31:12-17) Priesthood installed after a seven-day ordination (Exodus 28-29)	Seventh act of obedience “completes” the Tabernacle	Solomon two seven day feasts to dedicate the temple (1 Kgs 8:65)
“and God saw all that he had done, and behold, very good. And there was evening and morning, the sixth day.” [Gen 1:31] + “And God blessed the seventh day.”		“and Moses saw all the work they had done, and behold, just as YHWH commanded, so they did, and Moses blessed them.” [Exod 39:43]	Then the king faced about and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing.” [1 Kgs 8:14]
“and the skies and the land were completed ([ )]” [Gen 2:1]	“and it came about when he completed ()” Speaking to Moses on Mt. Sinai” [Exod 31:18]	“and Moses completed ()” the work ([ )]” [Exod 40:33]	“and Solomon built the temple and he finished ()” [1 Kgs 6:14]
“and God rested ()” [ ] on the seventh day...		“and the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of YHWH filled the tent.” [Exod 40:34]	“and the cloud filled the house of Yahweh” [1 Kgs 8:10-11]
... from all his work ()... and God blessed () the seventh day and made it holy ()” [ ]” [Gn 2:2-3]	“you shall keep the Sabbath for it is holy ()” “for you... Six days let the work () be done, and on the seventh day it is a Sabbath of Sabbath.” [Exod 31:14-15]	Aaron and his sons are brought before the tent for seven days in the ordination ceremony [Lev 8-9, see 8:35]	In the eleventh year, in the ... eighth month, the temple was finished throughout all its parts and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it. [1 Kgs 6:38] “And the work () of the pillars was finished. [1 Kgs 7:22] “Thus all the work () that King Solomon performed in the house of the Lord was finished.” [1 Kgs 7:51]
<b>Tragic Disruptions</b>			
Temptation and fall narrative: Genesis 3	Temptation and fall narrative: Exodus 32	Temptation and fall narrative: Leviticus 10	Temptation and fall narrative: 1 Kings 9:1-9 + 11:1-13

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The Creation paradigm also is recapitulated in other ways in the design of Noah's Ark and in Israel's emergence from Egypt and entrance into Canaan.

# The Sabbath, the Torah, and the Christian

The Sabbath Commandment, like the rest of the “law” was a practice for the nation of Israel but not for the Gentiles.<sup>8</sup> But even for Gentiles, the **Sabbath** is an invitation to **rest** and **trust** in God. It also is an invitation to **build one** another up and to share our gifts and resources with one another.

Beginning with the early church in Acts, we see Christians regularly gathering for teaching, prayer and fellowship.<sup>9</sup> After the New Testament times, those who were Messianic Jews (in current and early church) may have practiced Sabbath and the Lord's Day, but Sunday was never meant to be the “Christian Sabbath.”

Non-Jewish Christians are not obligated to keep the Sabbath, as such, but they are subject to higher standards, such as the daily practice of yielding our time and possessions to God<sup>10</sup> and the regular obligations of supporting our fellow believers,<sup>11</sup> building each other up<sup>12</sup> and participating with the church in making disciples.<sup>13</sup> Not just one day a week, but every day of our lives we should be remembering that we are not masters of our time or our possessions, that the daily discipline of inconveniencing ourselves is an expression of our trust in God's provision, that every day of our lives we should be trusting and resting in the Lord.

These principles which apply to the Sabbath, can be applied to the whole law. We are told that those who are born “of the Spirit” are not “under the law”<sup>14</sup> because Jesus fulfilled the law. However, that does not mean that the law can be ignored. In fact, not only does the law provide guidance for us,<sup>15</sup> but the expectations for our behavior are even more comprehensive. The New Testament explicitly tells us that

- hating our brother is equivalent to murdering our brother<sup>16</sup>
- we should not hate our enemy but love them<sup>17</sup>
- looking at someone with lust is like committing adultery<sup>18</sup>
- if we are forced to go one mile, then we should go two miles<sup>19</sup>

Our motivation should not come from trying to obey the external law “written in stone” but rather from the internal desires “written in our hearts”<sup>20</sup> to love – love God and to love one another. We should be

Not driven to obey the Commandment to keep the Sabbath  
but rather encouraged to live every day to God  
Not driven to obey the command to tithe  
but rather encouraged to be generous  
Not driven to obey the command to not covet  
but rather encouraged to promote the welfare of others  
Not driven to obey commandments  
but rather encouraged to express the fruits of the Spirit  
Not driven to obey externally given commands  
but rather encouraged to grow in our internal desire to love  
Not driven to avoid doing wrong  
but rather encouraged to delight in finding the best way to do what is right

<sup>8</sup> Acts 15:1-21, 29; 21:25

<sup>9</sup> Acts 2:42-47; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2

<sup>10</sup> Acts 2:44-47

<sup>11</sup> Acts 4:32; 1 John 3:16-18; 2 Cor 9:6-15; 8:14-15;

<sup>12</sup> 2 Cor 13:10; Eph 2:21; 4:29

<sup>13</sup> Matt 28:19

<sup>14</sup> Rom 6:14

<sup>15</sup> Gal 3:24-26

<sup>16</sup> 1 John 3:15

<sup>17</sup> Matt 5:43

<sup>18</sup> Matt 5:28

<sup>19</sup> Matt 5:41

<sup>20</sup> 2 Cor 3:3

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Understanding how the **Sabbath** celebration was only **pointing** to an eternity of **daily** enjoying the presence of God in all that we do can help us see how all the other “laws” are designed to do the same. Just as the tabernacle was a symbol of God being with us in space, the Sabbath was a reminder of God being with us in time and together they remind us that God owns all of space and time and desires to share it all with us.