

WEEK 1: AND HE RESTED...

THIS WEEK'S BIG IDEA:

The Sabbath principle is the key to freedom.

The word "Sabbath" first appears in Scripture during the exodus from Egypt. But that's not the first time the concept is mentioned. Take note of Genesis 2.

"By the seventh day God completed His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done (Gen. 2:2)."

Obviously, God had the Sabbath in mind from the very beginning. Let's take a peek into the Jewish mindset about the significance of the Sabbath.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, a twentieth-century Jewish scholar and author, wrote something intriguing about this Genesis 2 passage that is worth noting, just as a way of viewing Sabbath through different eyes. Read the following excerpt slowly, and pay close attention to the portions I've highlighted. Note the word *menuha* means rest in Hebrew.

"The words: 'On the seventh day God finished His work' (Genesis 2:2), seem to be a puzzle. . . . We would surely expect the Bible to tell us that on the sixth day God finished His work. Obviously, the ancient rabbis concluded, there was an act of creation on the seventh day. Just as heaven and earth were created in six days, menuha was created on the Sabbath. After six days of creation—what did the universe still lack? Menuha. Came the Sabbath, came menuha, and the universe was complete."²

Before we continue with this scholar's statement, take a moment to re-read the highlighted portions of the quote. Take your time. I'll wait.

Record your observations and insights about the highlighted portions of the quote.

Heschel continues:

"*Menuha*, which we usually render with "rest" means here much more than withdrawal from labor and exertion, more than freedom from toil, strain or activity of any kind. *Menuha* is not a negative concept but something real and intrinsically positive. This must have been the view of the ancient rabbis if they believed that it took a special act of creation to bring it into being, that the universe would be incomplete without it. 'What was created on the seventh day? Tranquility, serenity, peace and repose.'"³

All right, I'll wait for you to read the highlighted sections here again as well. Remember, S.L.O.W.L.Y. Drink it in.

Record your thoughts about the highlighted portions.

While the traditional Christian viewpoint is slightly different, that God rested because He had completed the creation process, this premise is thought-provoking, isn't it? Because, the fact is, God did create something. The 7th day wasn't the Sabbath day until God made it so. God did, in fact, introduce a concept that did not previously exist: rest. *Menuha*. On the Sabbath day, He provided a portrait of fulfillment, completeness and blessing that would be the framework for Sabbath in generations to come. The purpose of God's Sabbath day was not to put up His proverbial feet, take a load off, and chill out after creating the universe in the previous days. He wasn't tired. He was expressing satisfaction. Creation was complete, so He rested. And in doing so, He introduced the concept of rest to humanity.

Rest was the capstone of creation.