

# Doctrine and Covenants 58–59

“ANXIOUSLY ENGAGED IN A GOOD CAUSE”

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## Summary:

*Doctrine and Covenants 58. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, in Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, August 1, 1831. Earlier, on the first Sabbath after the arrival of the Prophet and his party in Jackson County, Missouri, a religious service had been held, and two members had been received by baptism. During that week, some of the Colesville Saints from the Thompson Branch and others arrived (see section 54). Many were eager to learn the will of the Lord concerning them in the new place of gathering.*

*1–5, Those who endure tribulation will be crowned with glory;*

*6–12, The Saints are to prepare for the marriage of the Lamb and the supper of the Lord;*

*13–18, Bishops are judges in Israel;*

*19–23, The Saints are to obey the laws of the land;*

*24–29, Men should use their agency to do good;*

*30–33, The Lord commands and revokes;*

*34–43, To repent, men must confess and forsake their sins;*

*44–58, The Saints are to purchase their inheritance and gather in Missouri;*

*59–65, The gospel must be preached unto every creature.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 59. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, in Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, August 7, 1831. Preceding this revelation, the land was consecrated, as the Lord had directed, and the site for the future temple was dedicated. On the day this revelation was received, Polly Knight, the wife of Joseph Knight Sr., died, the first Church member to die in Zion. Early members characterized this revelation as “instructing the Saints how to keep the sabbath and how to fast and pray.”*

*1–4, The faithful Saints in Zion will be blessed;*

*5–8, They are to love and serve the Lord and keep His commandments;*

*9–19, By keeping the Lord’s day holy, the Saints are blessed temporally and spiritually;*

*20–24, The righteous are promised peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come.*

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## Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

### How was and is God’s relationship with his covenant children manifested?

A view of the ancient Israelite guidance on judgements, and of appointed judges along with the Children of Israel’s anciently revealed directions on repentance as well as their views on the holiness of the Sabbath day reveal God’s special covenants – then and now. “Whenever God has called and authorized men to perform a work in any age or dispensation, it has been done by revelations, and not by mere impressions, or some undefinable, internal feelings, which leave the mind in uncertainty and doubt. Noah was called by the word of the Lord to be a preacher of righteousness, and to build an ark. Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, were called by revelation to perform a

great variety of duties. Moses and Aaron were called to the priest’s office by the word of the great Jehovah. Seventy elders of Israel were called by revelation to assist Moses. Joshua was appointed by the word of the Lord through Moses to be his successor in leading Israel. The successors of Aaron were appointed to the priesthood by revelation. The Judges of Israel were called by visions, by angels and by the inspiration of the Spirit. Samuel was called by the voice of the Lord. And finally, all their officers, wise men and prophets, down to the days of Malachi, were called by new revelation.” (Orson Pratt *Divine Authenticity of BofM*, No. 2 (1850), p.17)

### What is the responsibility of a witness?

“The laws involving witnesses are many. Not all people are qualified to testify before the court. Among those not admissible are slaves,

minors (before bar mitzvah), lunatics, the deaf and dumb, the blind, criminals who have not repented their crime, relatives of any party involved in the case or the judges, one who stands to gain from his testimony, and, in certain cases, women. Any person who has seen the event but does not testify is liable to punishment which will be meted out to him by God. In criminal cases the witness is under obligation to testify of his own accord; in civil cases the duty to testify arises only when the man is summoned to do so. "The court warns the witnesses that bearing false witness is a serious crime and each witness is investigated and interrogated separately in order to make sure that he is not lying. If it is established that the witnesses have testified falsely, they are disqualified from ever bearing witness again and, under certain circumstances receive . . . the same punishment the accused would have received had he been convicted. If one witness should contradict another, or say something contradicted by fact-the testimony is rejected. The Bible declares that in order to convict, the evidence must be given by at least two witnesses. However, in certain cases such as those requiring an oath, a single witness is valid. A testimony must be given by the witness himself and not by another who says that he heard such a testimony. Acceptable witnesses who sign a document render it valid. "*Halakhic* (legal) requirements of the marriage ceremony include . . . giving of the ring by the groom to the bride in the presence of two valid witnesses; "Today in courts in most countries, it is common practice to 'swear in' all witnesses. Jewish law never adopted this custom, preferring to accept testimony without the administration of an oath, as long as there were at least two witnesses who corroborated each other's testimony, as well as other supportive evidence. Testimony given under oath was, in fact, considered to be a particularly weak form of evidence, and it was only accepted when there was a complete lack of something better. When the judicial oath was administered, it was only used in civil cases and then not to the witnesses but to the defendant, or less often, to the plaintiff. In capital cases, a judicial oath was never administered, since it was assumed that no

one charged with a capital crime could be believed, even under oath. "In Jewish law, perjury can only be proven by the evidence of two other witnesses who both testify that the perjurer could not have been present at the time and place he claims. These second witnesses must give their evidence in the presence of the first witness. Only in this way can the charge of perjury be leveled: if the second witnesses simply disagree with the first but cannot break his alibi, or if the second witnesses do not offer their refutation in front of the first, this constitutes not perjury, but contradiction in which case all the evidence is disregarded. "The punishment for perjury is laid down in **Deuteronomy 19:19-21**: 'You shall do to him as he schemed to do to his fellow (i.e., the accused).' There was considerable discussion on the death sentence for perjurers, complicated by a debate on whether a perjurer who had intended to kill by his false testimony, but had not in fact succeeded in doing so, was himself liable for execution. The law was interpreted to mean that a perjurer should suffer what he had schemed to do, not what had occurred, but in practice the death sentence was rarely carried out for any offense . . . perjurers were usually fined or flogged . . . never allowed to act as witnesses again . . . convictions for perjury were widely publicized." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **How consistent are the standards for witnesses?**

One of the reasons witness for the restoration could be given in ancient times is because the Old Covenant was the same as the New Covenant. "It was the design of the councils of heaven before the world was, that the principles and laws of the priesthood should be predicated upon the gathering of the people in every age of the world . . . Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world . . . for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles." (**Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Six 1843-44, Pg.308**) In biblical times, men were called as judges or prophets in Israel when they understood the law and had extra abilities and spiritual gifts. "The *shofet*, or judge, had to

meet strict qualifications, besides just knowing the law. Among these qualifications were piety, wisdom, humility, gentility and human understanding. When Moses set up the first courts, he looked for 'able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain' (**Exodus 18:21**) and 'wise men, and understanding and full of knowledge.' "Daniel was a Jewish sage and prophet who lived in Babylonia during the sixth century B.C.E. Because of his great wisdom and ability to interpret dreams, Daniel rose to positions of responsibility and honor in the court of kings Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius. However, as a Jew, he was constantly tormented by his rivals who denounced him for not worshiping the idols of the land. Daniel's piety and faith in God always stood firm and despite all dangers, he continued to pray daily in the traditional Jewish way. "Potiphar respected Joseph's wisdom and put him in charge of his entire household. When Potiphar's wife fell in love with Joseph and he refused to respond to her, she lied about him to Potiphar, who immediately had him imprisoned. The chief jailer soon put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners. He interpreted the dreams of two important prisoners, saying that one would be freed and one would die. Although the interpretation came true, the man who was freed forgot him. He remained in prison for two more years, until Pharaoh requested an interpreter for his strange dreams. Joseph was called before Pharaoh to hear them and God gave him the wisdom to understand that the dreams predicted seven years of plenty throughout the kingdom, to be followed by seven years of famine. He suggested that food be stored and distributed during the years of hunger. Pharaoh realized that Joseph was honest and wise and ordered him to supervise all necessary preparations. Once again Joseph rose to a high position, and became Pharaoh's chief minister. (**Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.**)

### **What can I do to become a "Master of the Good Name?"**

*Ba'al Shem Tov* is a descriptive title which means the "Good Master of the Name" (for the "Master of the Good Name"), and the "Name" refers to the Name of God. Thus, the bearer of

the title was a person who was able to invoke the Name of God for the purpose of healing the sick or in other worthy causes. "Although the capacity to obtain wisdom might be considered a natural endowment, wisdom itself had to be learned, and could be taught. The two principal methods of teaching were *musar* (instruction or training) and *ezah* (counsel, or persuasion) according to whether the teacher's authority was imposed or freely sought. In general, the teacher's *musar* was an appeal to reason and conscience and to the pupil's own desire for knowledge and understanding. The wisdom was transmitted by a saying or proverb; a rhetorical question; a parable or allegory; and imaginative tales and anecdotes. Despite this great emphasis on teaching and learning, however, wisdom ultimately remained a divine gift rewarding those who desired it enough to submit to its discipline." (**Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.**)

### **How much true religion is manifested in judgement?**

Both in the Bible and in the Book of Mormon the term "judge" has an ecclesiastical connection. They were the leading elders of the people. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there are "Elders" who are the "Judges of Israel." "Now the confessed offender is not left without hope, for he can obtain forgiveness by following the course outlined, and by forsaking sins comparable to that committed, as well as all other sin, and living before the Church and the Lord in such manner as to win approbation of both. The offender who has brought stigma and affront to the ward, the stake or the mission should seek the forgiveness of those he has thus offended. That may be had at times through the presiding authorities of the various divisions of the Church. At other times it may be appropriate and quite necessary to make amends for public offenses and seek forgiveness before organizations of the people. The Judges of Israel will determine this matter. (**Conf. Rep., Apr., 1954, pp. 10-13.**)" (**Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.3, p.278**) "Whenever God has called and authorized men to perform a work in any age or dispensation, it has been done by

revelations, and not by mere impressions, or some undefinable, internal feelings, which leave the mind in uncertainty and doubt. Noah was called by the word of the Lord to be a preacher of righteousness, and to build an ark. Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were called by revelation to perform a great variety of duties. Moses and Aaron were called to the priest's office by the word of the great Jehovah. Seventy elders of Israel were called by revelation to assist Moses. Joshua was appointed by the word of the Lord through Moses to be his successor in leading Israel. The successors of Aaron were appointed to the priesthood by revelation. The Judges of Israel were called by visions, by angels and by the inspiration of the Spirit. Samuel was called by the voice of the Lord. And finally, all their officers, wise men and prophets, down to the days of Malachi, were called by new revelation." (Orson Pratt Divine Authenticity of BofM, No. 2 (1850), p.17)

### How much does age and experience influence judgement?

"Because of the experience of the aged, old age and wisdom are sometimes regarded as going together. Thus, throughout the Bible and *Talmud*, the word 'elder' means judge, leader, or sage. On the other hand, the Book of Job also stresses that there are young men who are wiser than old men. "The *shofet*, or judge, had to meet strict qualifications, besides just knowing the law. Among these qualifications were piety, wisdom, humility, gentility and human understanding. When Moses set up the first courts, he looked for 'able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain' (Exodus 18:21) and 'wise men, and understanding and full of knowledge' (Deuteronomy 1:13). They were charged to 'hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger,' not to be partial in judgment but to 'hear the small and the great alike, fear no man, for judgment is God's' (Deuteronomy 1:16-17). A judge was forbidden to accept any gift from a person being tried; no matter how disinterested he considered his own judgments, since 'bribes blind the eyes of the righteous . . .'" "Even though the court for trying

monetary cases consisted of the simple (*Hediyot*) judges, a single expert (*Mumheh*) judge, renowned for his judicial capability was sufficient. In the *Talmud* there are regulations about mistakes made by the court; under which circumstances the judges are required to reimburse a person wrongly made liable. For monetary cases the judges were chosen by the parties involved; each side choosing one and those two together choosing the third. But judges were also appointed by the communities. In the State of Israel, the rabbinical court judges (*Dayyanim*, the word *Shofet* is used for secular court judges) are appointed by a special committee presided over by the chief rabbis which includes representatives of the Ministry of Justice." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### How does the restoration carry on the judgmental process?

The members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have an ecclesiastical legal system that includes "Judges in Israel." They are the Branch Presidents, Bishops and the Stake Presidents. The modern Hebrew word for president is "*nasi*." "In biblical use, *nasi* refers to a person of importance, a leader, a tribal ruler or a king. Under the Roman occupation of *Erez* (land of) Israel toward the end of the period of the second Temple, when there was no independent Jewish leadership, the term *nasi* was used by Jewish rulers to show their authority while not claiming kingship. "The title is best known for its reference to the presiding judge of the Sanhedrin (high court) although some sources claim the term was first applied to Judah ha-Nasi who was head of the Sanhedrin toward the end of the second century. The *nasi* presided over court sessions . . ." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) There are, however, religious rights in Israel. There are two legal systems, secular and religious so that religious people of some major religions in Israel can take disputes or legal processes to their own judges. The British set up this system before the State of Israel was formed. There are several different religious courts throughout Israel. They include the Orthodox Jews, Moslems, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Catholics, Syrian Orthodox and the



Bahais. The Bahai religious courts are the only ones established after the State of Israel was recognized.

### **Kings or Judges?**

"From the political point of view, the people of Israel have more often been ruled by monarchies than by democratic forms of government. The Book of Deuteronomy makes provision for the people of Israel to have a king but insists that the king must rule by law and 'that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren.' In biblical times, the Israelites believed that their government had to derive from God. Thus, when Moses accepted the advice of his father-in-law Jethro to appoint leaders, he first obtained God's permission and then, with God's authority, appointed judges. Later, the people rejected the advice of the prophet Samuel and insisted on having a king—this led to the reign of Saul, followed by that of David. In spite of this, Jewish law still states that decisions are to be made and conflicts to be resolved according to the principle of majority rule." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The efforts of the modern Jewish state to bring biblical theocracy together with democracy gives some noteworthy comparisons. Nowadays, the religious Jews, Bahais and Latter-day Saints anticipate an eventual theocracy. This is in stark contrast to the secularism and materialism so prevalent in modern society. "Following the Six-Day War of June 1967 and the reunification of Jerusalem, all of the holy sites in the Land of Israel came under Israeli administration, and freedom of access was guaranteed to all religions. The Israel government resolved to safeguard all sacred sites, and gave the head of each religious community management of its own holy places." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The underlying considerations in establishing the modern State of Israel and its legal system go back to ancient times and the biblical system while embracing the principles of democracy. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. That probably justifies the government of the United States of America to be as protective and supportive of Israel as it is.

### **Again, what is it to repent?**

The members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are blessed with additional scriptures such as the book of Doctrine and Covenants. Jews could view it as another part of LDS *Haftorah*, (writings of the Prophets). Literally, it is the reading of *Nevi'im*, the "Prophets," in the land of America—with their explanations and heavenly insights—based on Eternal truths. The connection to the past prophets is that truth is consistent. The first verse of the Book of Mormon reveals this key of understanding God's will, "learning of the fathers." The Hebrew word for "going back" is the same as "repent." The Doctrine and Covenants together with all the scriptures teach Faith in the Lord as taught by true learning of the fathers. That leads us to repent, make the true covenant of Baptism for remission of sins and rewards us with the blessing of the Gift of the Holy Ghost. The last verse of **Section One in the Doctrine and Covenants** is that the ". . . truth abideth forever and ever." "Repentance in Hebrew is known as *Teshuvah*, which literally means 'return,' and signifies a return to God. In Hebrew, a person who repents his sins is known as a *Ba'al Teshuvah*. Many rabbis of the *Talmud* believed that the real *Ba'al teshuvah* is greater even than a person who has never sinned and they furthermore said that when a person repents out of love of God (and not just out of fear of divine punishment), all the sins he had committed are considered to be *mitzvot*, (ultimately, blessings). This is perhaps the most comforting doctrine that Judaism has given to the world. "A unique aspect of the Jewish faith is that although God rules the world with absolute justice, He is also merciful and forgives sins against Him. The doctrine of repentance is based on this belief." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **What is the process of repentance?**

"A unique aspect of the Jewish faith is that although God rules the world with absolute justice, He is also merciful and forgives sins against Him. The doctrine of repentance is based on this belief. "Although Judaism sees sin as a most serious matter, even the sinner is

not without hope. One of the most important theological doctrines of both the Bible and the *Talmud* is that if a sinner repents his bad deeds, God will forgive him. Repentance consists of several stages-firstly the sinner must reflect on his actions and realize that he has indeed done the wrong thing. He must then make up his mind never to do it again, and confess his sin. This confession is not made to any other human being but is made by the sinner directly to God. On this basis the two confessions *Ashamnu* and *Al-Het* were introduced into the prayers for the Day of Atonement which is a special occasion for repentance and forgiveness. However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again. "Repentance in Hebrew is known as *teshuvah*, which literally means 'return,' and signifies a return to God.

### **Can I forgive and forget?**

There is a mistaken idea that if one truly repents and truly forgives, he will forget. The scriptural verses about remembrance indicate that the Lord is the one who will forget our mistakes. Apparently we need to have memory, because it is from our memory of good and bad that we learn. As we remember our sins and the sins of our forefathers, we can overcome ourselves from repeating the same mistakes. "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:33-34) There is great value in being reconciled with God through the process of remembering. It leads us to seek forgiveness and imbues us with a sense of forgiving.

"It is natural for someone who has endured a terrible disaster to want to bury his painful

memories along with the dead and forget the past. But the Jews, being only a tiny minority in the world and having a long history of persecution, cannot afford to forget that Nazism brutally murdered six million of their people. Thus in 1953 the *Knesset*, Israel's parliament, established *Yad Vashem*, the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, to perpetuate their memory." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) Alma teaches, as prophets taught in the past and as they teach today, to look forward to the past! In other words, our memory must be "before" us so that we can learn from the past. At the same time, our future is before us as well. In that way we have the advantage of a "wide screen" view of life. ". . . again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember . . ." (Alma 13:1) Throughout time there have been symbolic and functional artifacts that brought to our minds or reinforced God's counsel to his children. To this day, Jews are counseled to place a "*Mezuzah*" on their door posts and on their gates so that in all their comings and goings and in all their "doings" they may remember the Lord.

### **What is so uplifting about forgiveness?**

On the subject of temptation and repentance, one of the most important theological doctrines of both the Bible and the *Talmud* is that if a sinner repents of his bad deeds, God will forgive him. "Repentance consists of several stages-firstly the sinner must reflect on his actions and realize that he has indeed done the wrong thing. He must then make up his mind never to do it again, and confess his sin. This confession is not made to any other human being but is made by the sinner directly to God. On this basis the two confessions *Ashamnu* and *Al-Het* were introduced into the prayers for the Day of Atonement which is a special occasion for repentance and forgiveness. However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again. "Repentance in Hebrew is known as

*teshuvah*, which literally means 'return,' and signifies a return to God. A person who repents his sins is known as a *ba'al teshuvah*. Many rabbis of the *Talmud* believed that the real *Ba'al Teshuvah* is greater even than a person who has never sinned and they furthermore said that when a person repents out of love of God (and not just out of fear of divine punishment), all the sins he had committed are considered to be *mitzvot*. This is perhaps the most comforting doctrine that Judaism has given to the world." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) "A prime function of the prophet was to defend his people and to act as a mediator on their behalf. He constantly pleaded with Israel to seek God that they might live. He prayed that repentance might have the desired effect of invoking mercy. A prophet was not charged with religious innovation: his function was to clarify the teachings of the Bible. Moses was the 'master of the prophets.' No prophet after him succeeded as he did in penetrating the nature of the Divine." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

### What changed about the Sabbath Day?

"The Sabbath bears record of Christ: from Adam to Moses it was the 7th day to signify that our Lord rested on that day from his creative labors (*Ex. 20:8-11*); from Moses to Christ, the (extra high Sabbath days (were) . . . a different day each year to commemorate our Lord's leading of the children of Israel out of bondage (like the Passover Sabbath high days) (*Deut. 5:12-15*); and from the apostolic day until now, the Sabbath has been the first day of the week to point attention to our Lord's resurrection on his holy day." (*Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Pg.452*) In a religious Jewish home, every (weekly) Sabbath Eve begins with an old ritual of a blessing and pouring of a little pure wine (or living [spring] water if wine is not available) called *Kidush*. It is followed by a blessing, breaking, and eating of a little piece of the "*Hallah*" bread. This procedure is called "*Mozi*." The father or grandfather in the home always partakes first, and then others receive the emblems. "The table is set for the festive meal, with the Sabbath candles glowing in polished holders. The family stands and the father raises the brimming silver cup to say *Kiddush*, the

blessing and sanctification over wine. This age-old ceremony is in fulfillment of the biblical command, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' (*Exodus 20:8*) "*Kiddush* is recited on the evening of the Sabbath, or the festival, before the start of the meal. Nothing may be eaten before *Kiddush*. On Sabbath eve, the first paragraph of *Kiddush* includes a phrase from the end of the first chapter of Genesis and the passage at the beginning of the second which describe God's completion of Creation and His sanctification of the seventh day as a day of rest. *Kiddush* continues with the benediction for wine, preceded by the word *savri* (Attention!) so that all present, men and women, may fulfill the requirement of *Kiddush* by listening carefully to the recital of the prayer and by responding 'Amen' afterwards."

(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) On the Sabbath, a special bread called *hallah* is used. The *Hallah* for *Mozi* is baked sweeter than regular bread because the Sabbath is a "sweeter" day. There are some activities inappropriate for the Sabbath, yet other activities are encouraged.

### What are additional Sabbath rituals?

"From *Talmudic* times, it was the special duty of the housewife to bake the bread for the Sabbath. This bread, usually prepared from white flour, is also called '*hallah*.' Two such loaves are placed on the festive Sabbath table as a symbol for the double portion of *manna* which the Israelites in the wilderness received every Friday, and because of the *Showbread* in the Temple, which was displayed each Sabbath. "Funerals may not take place on the Sabbath or on the Day of Atonement . . . "In some communities it is customary for the father to bless his children on the *Sabbath* eve when he returns from the synagogue." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) Although previously mentioned, the collections of offerings are a part of Sabbath day activities. "In every town where there are Jews they must appoint 'charity wardens,' men who are well-known and honest that they should collect money from the people every Sabbath eve and distribute it to the poor . . . We have never seen or heard of a Jewish community which does not have a charity fund." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) It is interesting to see the similarity of young Aaronic

Priesthood bearers gathering "Fast Offerings" at the beginning of the month. Fasting is an integral part of Jewish life, yet never on a Sabbath unless it is Yom Kippur. There is a monthly *Yom Kippur Katan* (lesser), a day

before the beginning of every month. It is a fast day, again, never on a *Sabbath* (except the High Day of *Yom Kippur*) Throughout generations, the Sabbath has increased in symbolism.