



# The Art of the Sabbath

The Sabbath has long been understood to be a day of rest, during which we allow ourselves to settle into a state of contemplation and meditation. That the Sabbath inspires only passivity on our part is probably rooted in the fact that it was man and woman's first day. What could they do but contemplate and meditate in awe of the creation that surrounded them?

What has been forgotten are the preceding six days of creation that built up to the Sabbath—the six days that we remember in the keeping of the Sabbath as God's creative work. These six days were anything but lethargic. Life came into spectacular being as waters rose against the earth, as nature burst forth, and as species nobly stepped forward. These six days climaxed with the Sabbath, a day to remember these events which were anything but “restful.”

It is important not to neglect the object of our contemplation: the life, the force, and the joy it is to inspire. And this, in turn, should render our own souls restless to create. We come to develop an art of the Sabbath, for the Sabbath does not just come into being—it must itself be created. The atmosphere of peace and joy must be created. As the Talmudic rabbis put it: One is required to be happy on the Sabbath; it is a divine ordinance.

The Sabbath, then, must have the face of peace,

but with the inner glow of joy. Meditation should not outdo the joy of living. The Sabbath, with the reintegration of the element of joy, is then allowed to pulsate with life. What we once merely contemplated in the way that one contemplates a painting or a statue becomes alive, as though one could suddenly hear the painting or feel the eyes of the statue upon us. In such a way, the Sabbath can startle us as it draws us into the dance of its life.