

# God the Rest-Giver

## ***Introduction:***

*"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and **I will give you rest.** "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and **YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.** "For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."*

Compare from the Old Testament:

- ❑ Ex 33.14: *And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."*
- ❑ Jer 6.16: *Thus says the Lord, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you shall find rest for your souls."*
- ❑ Ezek 34.15: *"I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord God.*
- ❑ 2 Sam 7.11: *and I will give you rest from all your enemies.*
- ❑ Deut 5.33: *"according to all the way which the Lord your God commanded thee to walk in it, that he may give thee rest..."* (LXX)
- ❑ Jer 31.25: *For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes.*

## ***I. Nature of "Rest" in the Bible***

### **A. Basic idea**

1. "The frequent occurrences of God's promises to give his people "rest" include all of the preceding ideas: **a place to land on**, a place of **serenity**, and **cessation from effort**. But they also include a fourth idea, and that is **safety and security**. This is made clear by the several references to giving "rest **from his/their enemies on every side**" (Deut 12:10; 25:19; Josh 23:1; 2 Sam 7:1, 11; 2 Chron 14:7 [6]; Neh 9:28; Esth 9:16, 22; Isa 14:3). The sense is to get, or provide, **relief from threat or attack**. So God not only promises to give his people a place to settle, but **he also promises to give them a place of security**. It is this latter sense that is operative in the promises to the Transjordanian tribes that they may return to their home territories, once God has given their brothers rest (Deut 3:20; Josh 1:15; 22:4). It is this same idea that occurs in connection with David's and Solomon's decision to build the temple: God has now given them the security and leisure necessary to such an undertaking (e.g., 1 Kgs 5:4 [18]). [NIDOTTE, sv. Nuah]
2. Gen 8.4 *the ark 'rested' on Mt Ararat*
3. Image often used of birds landing in their nests or sheep reaching their pasture

## B. Rest is “from enemies” and “from threats”, from “every side”

1. *When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security* (Dt 12:10 NASB; cf 25.19)
2. *And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand.* (Jos 21:44, NASB)
3. *Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the Lord had given him rest on every side from all his enemies, 2 that the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains.”* (2 Sa 7:1; NASB)
4. *Solomon sent back this message to Hiram: 3 “You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God until the LORD put his enemies under his feet. 4 But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster.* (1 Ki 5:2; NIV).
5. *And Asa did good and right in the sight of the Lord his God, 3 for he removed the foreign altars and high places, tore down the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherim, 4 and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment. 5 He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. And the kingdom was undisturbed under him. 6 And he built fortified cities in Judah, since the land was undisturbed, and there was no one at war with him during those years, because the Lord had given him rest. 7 For he said to Judah, “Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the Lord our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side.” So they built and prospered.* (2 Ch 14:2; NASB).
6. *For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. 6 But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;* (2 Co 7:5; NASB).

## C. Rest is from “agitators” (smile)

1. Ex 23.11: *but on the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat.*
2. Is 62.6: *On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; All day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; 7 And give Him no rest until He establishes And makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

3. נחה ארן על-אפרים על; of birds; ark; נחה ארן על-אפרים; of spirit of ׀; spirit of Elijah; septre of wicked (in fig.); sq. ב loc.: of insects, (fig. of invaders); of soles of feet resting in water; hand of ׀; wisdom; anger; abs., = stop, of ark at stages of journey; cease speaking. 2. repose, be quiet, have rest: after labour (of God), (of cattle, (of slave); have rest from (מן) enemies; be at rest (from trouble), abs.; of the earth; in couch of the grave; in She ol; also לא תנוח לך = thou shalt not be at rest, cf. impers. ינוח לי = I should be at rest (in She ol). **Hiph. A. 1.** cause to rest = give rest to: a. sq. acc. רוחי ידו; so appar. sq. ב + pers., quiet (i.e. sate) my fury by (wreak it upon). b. usu. sq. ל pers.: (1) give rest to i.e. bring to resting-place; (2) of freedom from enemies; so + מדיב alone; (3) of freedom from suffering. c. make quiet in mind, set at rest ויניחה discipline thy son, that he may give

thee quiet (of mind). 2. *cause to rest* (i.e. *light*) upon, c. *acc. staff* + על pers.; c. *acc. blessing* + אל-; *cause to alight, set down*, c. *sf. pers.* + בתוך loc.; + אל- loc. For this *mng. v. esp. B. infr. B. 1. lay or set down, deposit, let lie*, c. *acc. rei, usu.* + word of place: stones at ford of Jordan, ark, garments; so, *acc. om.*; *place, put, sq. acc. pers.* + local modif.; *place corpse on* (אל-) *ass, in grave; horsemen and chariots in cities; tables in temple; idols in shrines (acc. om.)*. 2. *let remain, leave* (in present condition), *obj.* nations, people in wilderness; *sq. acc. rei* (leave unweighed); *leave behind sq. acc. pers.*; *leave name, for a curse; leave, name, for a curse; leave or bequeath to* (ל), c. *acc. rei*. 3. *leave* = depart from מקומך אל-תנחל do not leave thy place. 4. *abandon, sq. acc. pers.*; בל-תניחני לעשקי abandon me not to my oppressors. 5. *let alone* (refrain from interfering with), *sq. ל pers.*; *sq. acc. pers.*; = avoid. 6. *permit, c. acc. pers. Hoph. A. הניח-לנו* i.e. *no rest is granted to us. B. Pt.* [BDB, s.v.

## D. From pain, sorrow, harsh toil/work

1. Ex 23.12 (31.15): *Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease ...*
2. *When the Lord has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, 4 you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon:* [Is 14]
3. *This is the message which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written down these words in a book at Jeremiah's dictation, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying: 2 "Thus says the Lord the God of Israel to you, O Baruch: 3 'You said, "Ah, woe is me! For the Lord has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning and have found no rest."' 4 "Thus you are to say to him, "Thus says the Lord, "Behold, what I have built I am about to tear down, and what I have planted I am about to uproot, that is, the whole land." 5 'But you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold, I am going to bring disaster on all flesh,' declares the Lord, 'but I will give your life to you as booty in all the places where you may go.'" (Je 45:1; NASB).*
4. Hebrews 4:10 *For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His*

## E. From fear, and leads to security/safety

1. *When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security* (Dt 12:10 NASB; cf 25.19)
2. "Our root signifies not only absence of movement but being settled in a particular place (whether concrete or abstract) with **overtones of finality**, or (when speaking abstractly) of victory, salvation, etc... The martial use entails God's promise (Deut 12:10) and the fulfillment (Josh 21:44) to defeat Israel's enemies and give them **rest (victory and security)** in the land. [Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament]

## II. Extended Aspects of "Rest"

### A. Has an important subjective/psychological aspect to it

1. "And among those nations you shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a **trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul.**" (Dt 28.65, NASB)

2. *I am **not at ease**, nor am I **quiet**; I have **no rest**; but **trouble** comes.* (Job 3:26; NRSV).
3. *Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find **rest for your souls**.* (Je 6:16; NRSV).
4. *Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, 13 **I had no rest for my spirit**, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.* (2 Co 2:12; NASB).
5. *For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had **no rest**, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, **fears within**. 6 But God, who comforts the **depressed**, comforted us by the coming of Titus;* (2 Co 7:5; NASB).

## B. For example, the “soothing aroma” is from our word

1. “Soothing aroma”: in the sacrificial law, this is a regular term for the smell produced by burning the sacrifices (cf. Lev 1:9; 2:2; 3:5, etc). “Soothing” (חחינ) sacrifices have a restful (חני), **soothing**, pacifying effect on God. That God’s **anger** at sin is appeased by sacrifice is the clear implication of this phrase [WBC, Gen 6]
2. **חחינ** n.[m.] a quieting, soothing, tranquillizing — a soothing, tranquillizing, only in phr. **חחינ** = soothing, tranquillizing odour of sacrifices acceptable to God [BDB]
3. *You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have **burdened me** with your sins and **wearied me** with your offenses.* (Is 43:24, NIV).

## C. Social and Community Elements: Removal of treacherous / Help for others, with even a Universal dimension

1. *When the Lord has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, 4 you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: How the oppressor has ceased! How his insolence has ceased! 5 **The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked**, the scepter of rulers, 6 that struck down the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows, that ruled the nations in anger with unrelenting persecution. 7 **The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing.*** (Is 14:3; NRSV).
2. *Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, 12 He who said to them, “Here is rest, **give rest to the weary**,” And, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen.* (Is 28:11; NRSV).
3. *Their **Redeemer** is strong, the Lord of hosts is His name; He will **vigorously plead their case**, So that He may bring **rest** to the earth, But **turmoil** to the inhabitants of Babylon* (Jer 50:34; notice—reversal motif)
4. “In the prophetic books of Isaiah (esp. 11:10; 14:3, 7; 28:12; 32:18; 63:14; 66:1), Jeremiah (esp. 6:16; 31:2; 50:34), Lamentations (1:3; 5:5) and Micah (2:10) many of the above ideas continue to appear, but new elements are present too. The loss of rest is a powerful symbol of God’s judgment; rest is an element of the prophets’ eschatological hope; it points towards šālôm (‘peace’; cf. e.g. Is. 11:1–10; 32:17–18); and **it is more closely connected with social justice, being the responsibility of the Israelites towards one another.** [Alexander, T. D., & Rosner, B. S. (2001). **New Dictionary of Biblical Theology** (electronic ed.). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.]
5. “The martial use entails God’s promise (Deut 12:10) and the fulfillment (Josh 21:44) **to defeat Israel’s enemies** and give them rest (**victory** and security) in the land. [TWOT]

## D. The positive notion of “Refreshment” is present too

1. “*anapausin*: to become physically **refreshed** after ceasing activity or work—‘rest, to rest.’...‘let’s go ... to a quiet place and you can rest awhile’ Mk 6.31...‘you will find rest for yourselves’ Mt 11.29...In the use of (these Greek words), the focus of meaning seems to be upon **the restorative character of rest rather than mere cessation of activity** “. [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, c1989). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (Vol. 1, Page 259-260). New York: United Bible societies.]
2. ‘Rest was built into the natural rhythms of life by the Creator, who rested on the seventh day of creation (Gen 2:1–3). An important part of the meaning of rest is suggested by the mystery of divine rest: **it draws a boundary around work and exertion and takes a legitimate delight in celebrating what has been accomplished, without an urge to keep working**. The rest of God even includes an element that is crucial for humans who rest--**refreshment**. Exodus 31:17 tells us that God not only rested on the seventh day **but also “was refreshed”** (RSV)... We can see in this weekly rest the satisfaction of both a physical need (the reason Ex 23:12 gives for the prescribed rest is that people and animals “may be refreshed”) and **a spiritual requirement to set time aside for the worship of God**. Sabbath rest was buttressed by a system of festivals that constituted an important part of Hebrew religious life. **Such rest reorients a person’s values**, taking attention off the workaday preoccupation with getting and spending and onto God and spiritual realities.. [Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J., Longman, T., Duriez, C., Penney, D., & Reid, D. G. (2000, c1998). *Dictionary of biblical imagery* (electronic ed.). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.; That is “REBOOT”--smile]
3. “While there is the sense that rest is a cessation of labor (Gen 2), **the notion of rest is much richer** than that. God’s rest expresses the completion and goal of his purposes and the **enjoyment** of the perfection and harmony of creation.” [Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch, s.v. “Rest, Peace”]

## III. Specific Themes

### A. Promised by God

1. *And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand.* (Jos 21:44, NASB)
2. *Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.* (1 Ki 8:56; NASB).

### B. Accomplished by the Presence of God (mostly in Tabernacle/Temple)

1. Ex 33:14: “*My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest*”
2. “Psalm 95:11, which is important to the author of Hebrews, belongs to this tradition. ‘Rest’ here is a tangible good (rather than a personal entering into God); so also in the closely related Psalm 81 (esp. Ps. 81:13–16). The psalm’s oath therefore sums up the covenantal blessings promised to God’s people – **blessings of secure life in the land – which were bound up with God’s presence among them**. In its use of the perpetually present directive – ‘today if you hear his voice’ – long after the occupation of the land, the text seems to contain an element of promise. [Alexander, T. D., & Rosner, B. S. (2001). *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (electronic ed.). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.]

### C. This “Presence” Motif also hearkens back to the Genesis/Garden Rest

1. Hebrews 4:3 *For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, “As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,” although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.*
2. Hebrews 4:10 *For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His*
3. **“The Rest Tradition.** A very important OT theme is Yahweh’s gift of ‘rest’ to his people, from journeying or warfare, in the land of promise, Israel’s ‘resting place’. This theme constitutes a powerful affirmation of Yahweh’s continuing faithfulness – as well as being associated with Israel’s faithfulness – and is a summary of his good gifts to his people. In no way is the image one of blissful inactivity; **rather it is one of unhampered constructive activity.**” [Alexander, T. D., & Rosner, B. S. (2001). *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (electronic ed.). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.]

### D. And the Garden Rest is also linked to the Sabbath rest

1. “Such rest reorients a person’s values, taking attention off the workaday preoccupation with getting and spending and onto God and spiritual realities. **In the Bible willingness to engage in such rest is nothing less than a covenant sign—“a perpetual covenant” and “a sign” between God and his people** (Ex 31:16–17 RSV). Yet another part of the symbolism of sabbath rest was that it **pictured release from the bondage of Israel in Egypt** (Deut 5:15). **Rest is a form of freedom-from work, from human striving and acquisitiveness, from worldly preoccupations**...If willingness to rest is a sign of commitment to God, it is elsewhere viewed as a freedom from anxiety. Moses paints a picture of “the beloved of the Lord” as someone who “rests in safety” and “rests between [God’s] shoulders” (Deut 33:12 NRSV). Here is a picture of what rest ultimately involves in the Bible—a relinquishing of human self—assertion and a trust in God. [Dictionary of biblical imagery]
2. “The soteriological use forms around the theology of the sabbath. In Gen 2:2–3 *šābat* (cessation from labor) describes God’s rest, but in **Ex 20:11 *nūah* is used**. Hence, **man is not only to cease from his worldly pursuits** (Ex 31:12–17; cf. Isa 58:13–14), but **he is to enter into a state of victory/salvation rest** (Josh 1:13; cf. Deut 25:19). It is **only the presence and favor of God that makes this rest** (as well as martial rest) **possible** (Ex 33:14; cf. Isa 14:3, 7).” [TWOT]

### E. And there is a “Big Sabbath” rest ahead...

1. *m. Tamid* 7.4: “This was the singing which the levites used to sing in the Temple...On the Sabbath they sang A Psalm: A Song for the Sabbath Day (Ps92); a Psalm, a song for the time that is to come, for the day that shall be all Sabbath and rest in the life everlasting.”
2. “The understanding of rest is expanded in **Hebrews** by the use of Psalm 95 to include an eschatological sense. As noted earlier, Psalms 95 and 96 are a pair of royal enthronement psalms that speak of **the future reign of Messiah** over humanity and the earth...The promised rest in Hebrews is related to the Hebrew concept of *שַׁבָּת* (“sabbath”). The sabbath has the following meanings in the Hebrew Scriptures: (a) God’s rest on the seventh day of creation (Gen 2:2–3); (b) a day of the week in which to recall God’s role as Emancipator in bringing Israel out of Egypt (Deut 5:15); (c) an ordinance giving workers a rest (Exod 23:12); and (d) a sign of the Mosaic Covenant (Exod 31:13). **Yahweh intended that man share in the creation rest (i.e., sabbath), but Adam’s fall occurred and the sabbath rest was forfeited.** The way back to this rest is provided in **the coming kingdom.**” [BibSac—V145 #578—Apr 88—192]

## IV. *The Davidic Deliverer*

“As the ultimate Son of David, **Jesus announces the awaited rest**, thereby claiming to bring to fulfillment Yahweh’s OT promise. **Soteriologically**, this amounts to a claim that the total salvation God promised his people is being realized through Jesus as Messiah. **Christologically**, in promising rest **Jesus stands in the place reserved for Yahweh** in the OT. Oppressive forces once again threaten to overcome the powerless among God’s people; Jesus in response uses an OT expression for Yahweh’s salvation, but makes the promise in his own name.” [NDBT]

## V. *Recap*

1. Rest means being in your God-designed place
2. Rest means being through with any struggles needed to get there
3. Rest means not worrying about outside attacks or threats—it involves security and safety
4. Rest is not only an external state, but it is also an internal experience—close in nuance to English “peace” or “soothed”
5. Rest is freedom from distraction and agitation, to be able to focus on creation/enjoyment of delight, beauty, and warmth
6. Rest is designed to lead to refreshment of life—new energy, new joy, new eagerness to ‘see what God has for us today’
7. Community rest is designed to be for all people—not just biblical Israel.
8. Community rest will involve removal of the treacherous and destructive
9. Rest is designed to “reset” our values—when we are not ‘fighting fires’ we can see the Big Picture better
10. Rest was initially, was in the OT, is now with us spiritually, and will be in the New Future—based on the presence of a rest-making and rest-giving God
11. The *Shabbat*/Rest is our response to his *Nuah*/Rest-making efforts against our enemies:
  - a. Our legal guilt (justification)
  - b. Our condemnation under the spiritual powers (*Christus Victor*)
  - c. The degenerative situation caused by our sinful behavior (redemption)
  - d. Our deception about God’s heart, our sin, our helplessness
12. This *nuah*/rest fight was won by the One ‘meek and lowly of heart’
13. Rest is something we are supposed to share with others...
14. ...because our good-hearted God shared it with us.

## VI. *But “Rest” is not enough—we need “Shalom”...*

- “Therefore Thou didst deliver them into the hand of their oppressors who oppressed them, But when they cried to Thee in the time of their distress, Thou didst hear from heaven, and according to Thy great compassion Thou didst give them deliverers who delivered them from the hand of their oppressors. 28 **“But as soon as they had rest, they did evil again before Thee;** (Ne 9:27; NASB).
- *Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, 12 He who said to them, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,” And, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen.* (Is 28:11; NRSV).

## *Application, anyone?...*

*If “rest” flowed from the Temple to others, and WE are the New Testament temples...?*