

REL 402 - Judaism - Sabbath

I chose to do my reflection paper on the Sabbath. Friday night I started after I got home from work and my husband left, so that it would be more peaceful and it would be easier for me to concentrate. I tried very hard to get the most out of this experience so it was important to me to do my best. I did some previous research on the proper Jewish Sabbath and tried to follow it to the best of my ability. Again I started rather late Friday evening (because of my schedule) by quieting my house and dimming the lights. I read Psalms 95 to 99 in conclusion to the previous six days. This was a very relaxing beginning to my Sabbath experience. I also quietly played some Jewish songs from my computer in both English and Hebrew so I could understand what was being said. The songs that were common to Sabbath that I played were Shalom Aleichem and Hinei MaTov. I was surprised by how beautiful they were and how they relaxed me. I played them quietly and they put me into a kind of lull. It was a very nice experience much like meditating even though Sabbath is meant to bring people closer to God. I did this for about an hour and half before going to bed.

Saturday morning I allowed myself to sleep in as part of the relaxing aspect of Sabbath. I had breakfast and began the second part of Sabbath. I tried to relate more to the Jewish Sabbath by watching a service I found online. Given by Rabbi Richard Steinberg of Congregation Shir Ha-Ma'alot in Irvine, CA. the service was about an hour and half long.¹ I thought the video would allow me to feel like I was present in the service and would give a better idea of what the Sabbath meant to Jewish people. And it did. I felt like it was a good idea. After the closing I felt much like I do after a Christian service. Enlightened and happy. I am always in a good mood leaving a service. I felt peaceful and connected. I enjoyed the service and felt that I learned a lot about the Jewish community. I felt connected to them. I genuinely enjoyed watching the video. The choir and people singing sent chills down my spine. I'm not sure what it was because I didn't even understand the words, but it was beautiful and I think I felt the unity and love.

I spent the rest of the day quietly reading psalms from the Torah and relaxing. I tried my best to keep the house quiet and do little work. I sat outside for a while, just sitting and relaxing and trying to take in the nice weather. I never left the house or did major chores. Later that evening I ended my Sabbath by reading Psalm 145.

I enjoyed this experience of a Jewish Sabbath. I have not had a nice quiet day to myself in a long time, let alone spending it learning and experiencing something new like a Jewish Sabbath. It was generally enjoyable and enlightening.

¹ "JanetLB's Channel - YouTube." *YouTube - Broadcast Yourself*. Web. 12 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.youtube.com/user/JanetLB>>.