

Book of Jeremiah, and in their teaching on Sabbath observance we find no command to worship, but only the command to rest. Take the fourth commandment as given in Deuteronomy: "Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work." Persons are sometimes perplexed at the absence in the fourth commandment of any reference to worship, but the omission is quite intelligible in the light of history. The local shrines had been abolished and it would have been folly to command the average Israelite to go up to the Jerusalem Temple every Sabbath, but the Temple ritual was now the only acceptable mode of worshipping Jehovah. There is the same absence of the worship idea in Jeremiah: "Take heed to yourselves and bear no burden on the Sabbath day.... neither do ye any work." The original element of worship was eliminated, and the idea of its humanity was alone emphasized.

In the sixth century before Christ, when the Israelites had been carried away into Babylonian captivity, the Sabbath did not disappear as Hosea prophesied, but it was simply observed as a day of rest. The traditional religion could not be observed, for there was neither shrine nor Temple of Jehovah in this land of foreign gods. But there was at least one observance left to the people of Israel, by which they might mark themselves off from the strangers among whom they lived, and that was the Sabbath, as a commemoration of their emancipation from Egypt. This was almost all that was left to them of their traditional religion, and it was very natural that they should cling to it most tenaciously and almost exaggerate its significance. It was in this period of exile that the Great Unknown wrote the latter part of the Book of Isaiah and that Ezekiel gave us his prophecies; and in their writings we find this entirely new thought of the Sabbath as a sign between Jehovah and his chosen people. This idea was the natural product of the exile, and affords a pleasing and touching revelation of the passionate loyalty of Israel to Jehovah under adversity.