

## Creating space for the other world

### *Prayer for the Day*

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There can't be many people for whom the week starts on a Saturday. Indeed, that is the very antithesis of the creation story in the Jewish Bible. Yet that is just where I find myself, on the one hand privileged to be here, but at the same time perplexed by the very inside-out-ness of the BBC week!

In the book of Genesis, the creation of the world takes six 'days' (literal days for the fundamentalists; metaphorical days for those seeking an accommodation with science), "and on the seventh day Gd rested". That for Jews IS the definition of the week, and the definition of Shabbat, the Sabbath, the day of rest.

The ancient rabbis were much troubled by the fact that Genesis says that the creation took seven days, while the narrative describes only six. They reconciled the two by explaining that something \*was\* created on the seventh day, namely rest itself. Rest, in other words, is not a mere absence of the hurly-burly of everyday life, but something positive, something to be savoured, cherished, celebrated.

That is why from Friday at dusk till nightfall on Saturday Jews refrain from creative work. For 25 hours the phone does not ring, e-mail goes ignored, the bills lie on the doormat. Even the radio is not turned on - so I am a mere figment of the producer's imagination!

Instead, my day is filled with family and friends, prayer and contemplation, indeed rest and recuperation. Jewish mystics have suggested that the six days of the working week correspond to the six directions of the physical world – north, south, east, and west, up and down – and that shabbat, the seventh day, signifies the inner, the aetherial, the other-worldly.

So, amidst all the clamour of the world, may we all find what peace we can on this day of rest.