

## Lenten Meditation 3

Source: *Wild Mercy* by Mirabai Starr

### Laying Down Our Burden

In the Jewish tradition (not known for its feminist history), the holiest of holy days, holier than the high holidays is Shabbat, and she is female. She is called the Shekinah.

The Shekinah is the indwelling feminine presence of the divine. According to the ancient teachings she resides in exile during the rest of the week and on Shabbat she comes home. It is our task to receive her. It is her task to awaken us to what is real (love), and to who we are (love). We need to enact this ritual again and again, week after week. We are endlessly, forgetting, and remembering. In fact, we could look at all spiritual practices, all rituals, and ceremonies and creative arts as bells designed to awaken us from the slumber of our separateness.

Jewish wisdom affirms the body is holy and our connection to the Earth as sacred. Food, sex, art and beauty are all evidence of the loving presence of a loving God, who on Shabbat reveals herself as the Shekinah: indwelling, immanent, available.

The Shekinah is linked to missing the mark (the literal definition of the word sin). There's a rumor in the rabbinical literature that when humans got the truth of the one God and began misbehaving, The Holy One cast them into the desert, and the Shekinah went with them - immanent and available.

The Shabbat is about rest, about laying down our burdens, about unhooking from the compulsions of the to-do list. On Shabbat we build a temple in time and take refuge. Shabbat is about harmony, it's about restoring balance. It's about building community and remembering our interdependence with each other and with the Earth herself, taking responsibility for our habits of consumption and allowing ourselves to rest and recharge. Shabbat is about forging a direct relationship with the Shekinah, the feminine face of God. It's about taking refuge in her arms.

During this Lenten season, set aside a day or perhaps hours in each week as the Shabbat. Pick your own timeframe and find your own way to "keep the Sabbath holy."

The important thing is to cultivate a regular practice of laying aside all daily concerns and letting yourself rest in the arms of The Shekina.