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MINISTRIES

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Out of His Place

Why does Scripture say to not go out of our place on the Sabbath?

Exodus 16:29

See! Lord [YHWH] has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.”

Some have interpreted this particular Scripture to mean that one is not to leave their dwelling place on the Sabbath.

The important word here in English is “place.”

In Hebrew, this is the word used for the English word, “place” (*maʿqom*). This word is used at least 400 times in the TANAKH.

Its usage ranges anywhere from the place you are standing, to a city, or even a country.

Of course, that is not too helpful in figuring out what it means when it says 'do not leave your place'.

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, translates Exodus 16:29 as the following:

Exodus 16:29 (Septuagint)

See, for the Lord [YHWH] has given you this day as the sabbath, therefore he has given you on the sixth day the bread of two days: ye shall sit each of you in your **houses**; let no one go forth from his place on the seventh day.

The translators of the Septuagint translated this verse to specifically state that Israel was commanded to not leave their houses on the Sabbath.

Does that mean that we are to not leave our houses on the Sabbath?

In Acts 1:12, we learn that it was well accepted that you could leave your house on Shabbat from the phrase, “A Sabbath day’s journey.”

The Jews developed an interpretive tradition in response to the question, “how far can we walk on the Sabbath without it being rest?” In a modern unit of measurement, that translated to about a half a mile, perhaps a little more. They were certainly much more strict in their understanding than YHWH likely intended.

But, that was their understanding. And even in their strict interpretations of what it meant to rest on the Sabbath, they still understood that you could leave your house on the Sabbath.

We see Yeshua, the disciples, Paul, and many others in the faith meeting at the synagogues on the Sabbath in the New Testament. That certainly means that they understood that you could leave your house on the Sabbath.

The very fact that people were gathering together on Shabbat proves that people were leaving their home in an environment in which strict enforcement of proper observance of Shabbat existed.

It was Yeshua’s custom to travel to the synagogues on the Sabbath.

Luke 4:16

And he [Yeshua] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

Paul did the same, he had the very same custom:

Acts 17:1-2

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

In Luke 14, we have an instance of Yeshua entering a home on Shabbat, healing a man, and then instructing the healed man leave the home on Shabbat.

Luke 14:1-4

One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus [Yeshua] responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away.

So, if it is not permitted to leave a home on Shabbat, why would Yeshua instruct a man to leave a home?

Let's consider Numbers 15:32-36

Numbers 15:32

Once, when the Israelites were in the wilderness, they came upon a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. Those who found him as he was gathering wood brought him before Moses, Aaron, and the whole community. He was placed in custody, for it had not been specified what should be done to him. Then the LORD [YHWH] said to Moses, “The man shall be put to death: the

whole community shall pelt him with stones outside the camp.” So the whole community took him outside the camp and stoned him to death—as the LORD [YHWH] had commanded Moses.

So, if leaving your dwelling on the Sabbath is breaking the Sabbath, then those who found the man gathering wood were also violating the Sabbath by leaving their dwelling.

Also consider 2 Kings 4:23...

2 Kings 4:23

But he said, “Why are you going to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath.” She answered, “It’s all right.”

The woman was going to see Elisha that day because of her son. Notice that she must have regularly went to see him on the Sabbath as that was the expectation.

The Sabbath is all about resting. We are to rest. Our servants are to rest. Our animals are to rest. There is nothing about leaving a home that contradicts rest.

Even the most strict Pharisees, with all of their strict interpretations and added traditions that made the Torah burdensome, were not so bold as to interpret the Torah in such a way that forbade a person to exit their home on Shabbat.

There is nothing about stepping through a threshold to exit a dwelling that constitute as work and therefore breaks Shabbat.

Even in the context of Exodus 16:29, the instruction for a person to stay in his place was so that they would not gather manna (in other words, work).

This instruction to Israel is not repeated in the Torah. It was not part of the instructions received at Sinai. It is a contextual instruction intended to deal with a circumstantial problem.

So, why is this an instruction dealing with a circumstantial problem? How do we know that? Why is this instruction not repeated in Leviticus, Deuteronomy, or Numbers? As with most things, the answer is in the context.

Exodus 16:22-30

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, “This is what the Lord [YHWH] has commanded: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord [YHWH]; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.’” So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord [YHWH]; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.”

On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the Lord [YHWH] said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? See! The Lord [YHWH] has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.” So the people rested on the seventh day.

It should go without saying, but the whole purpose of the Sabbath is to set it apart by means of resting.

That is it. No more, no less. We rest...our employees, or servants, rest...our animals rest.

We find that Moses was dealing with a problem of some still trying to gather manna on the Sabbath. So, as a consequence to that specific problem, they were then told to stay in their houses. It's as simple as that. The instruction to stay in their houses was a corrective action related to a pattern of disobedience, not related to any ongoing specific or proper means to observe the Sabbath.

There is no commandment anywhere in the Torah that states that the Sabbath is more than resting.

However, just because we can leave our home on the Sabbath, does not mean it really makes sense to walk twenty miles.

Wherever you are located on Shabbat, do not travel so much that it feels contrary to resting. This is different for everyone.

An 80-year old man is going to feel like it is more work to walk a mile than a 12-year old boy.

That is understandable, right?

There is a little bit of wiggle room among people in their understanding on what constitutes as being restful or when something begins to feel like work, which of course, is contrary to resting.

So, all that being said...driving an hour or two might not be contrary to rest for you. For some, while we certainly encourage fellowship on the Sabbath, simply leaving the house might not feel restful at all. Determine these things for you and your house.

The Pharisees answered such questions for us, and they decided to make their own specifics and blanket commands for all. We already mentioned the "Sabbath Day's Journey." Yeshua gives his response to us in Mark 7 and Matthew 23 on those kinds of matters. It did not go well for the Pharisees when they elevated traditions to be matters of obedience, thus violating Deuteronomy 4:2.

We suggest simply resting on Shabbat, but we are not going to tell you what degree of travel breaches that definition of rest.

My personal answer to that question will be different today, than 50 years from now, providing I am still alive. Walking from the bedroom to the kitchen today is easy and not work. 50 years from now, staying in bed all day on the Sabbath might be my definition of rest.

Some might be uncomfortable with the idea that a commandment might be able to be applied a little differently from one person to the next. The Pharisees were uncomfortable with that as well, and took matters into their own hands by building fences around the Torah.

We have to use wisdom and maturity. If YHWH Himself used generalities in a commandment, by its very own definition, it will be generally applied individually to some degree.

If YHWH did not give us specifics on how far we can travel on the Sabbath, then we have no right to either.

How do we REALLY know that Exodus 16:29 is about rest like all of the other Sabbath commandments since the beginning of creation and not something new?
How do we REALLY know that is what Exodus 16:29 is about?

Well, remember, context is everything.

The very next verse, verse 30:

Exodus 16:30

“So the people rested on the seventh day.”

Leaving a house in and of itself is not work. However, leaving a house to gather manna...well, that is certainly work. And that is the problem that Moses was dealing with at the time. People were trying to gather manna on the Sabbath. So what was the solution? Stay in your houses so that there are no attempts to gather manna!

The proper understanding of Exodus 16:29 requires applying the immediate context and circumstances at the time. The instruction for Israel to not leave their place (or house in the case of the Septuagint translation), is specific to a corrective action dealing with the problem of some going out and gathering manna. Consequently, and understandably, we do not see this repeated in the Torah given at Sinai.

We hope that this teaching blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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