

## The Meaning and Intent of the Sabbath Rest: An Exegetical Analysis of Exodus 20:8-11

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### Abstract

This study examines the meaning and intent of the Sabbath rest. This study achieves this by conducting an exegetical analysis of Exodus 20:8-11. The Sabbath commandment obligated the Israelites to rest after laboring for six days. From the reviewed literature, it can be deduced that Exodus 20:8-11 reflects a deep theological, spiritual, and covenantal relationship between God and His people. This is further supported in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, which highlights the liberation of the Israelites from slavery bondage. The Sabbath, therefore, signifies not only resting but also a way to enhance the relationship between God and His people. The Sabbath serves as a constant reminder of God's sovereignty and ability to provide, thus encouraging trust in His care and fostering spiritual renewal by resting. Though the sabbath may not be observed in the same way as it was when it was instituted in the Old Testament, it will be argued in this article that, for the church and general society, the Sabbath provides a comprehensive model (frequency rhythm and object) for worshipping and community life, as well as advocacy for social justice and equality amongst all people.

**Keywords:** *Remember, Sabbath, Work, Sanctify, Bless*

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### 1. Introduction

In Exodus 20:8-11, we come across the fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments given by God to the children of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai. Due to its significant place within the Hebrew Bible, it has maintained its position in the field of scholarship as a topic of scholarly consideration and theological reflection for centuries. This exegetical article aims to provide an exegetical study of Exodus 20:8-11, exploring its theological, cultural, historical, and literary dimensions to deepen the understanding of the Sabbath commandment and its relevance for Christian believers in our current church and the general society.

Exodus 20:8-11 captures the importance of the Sabbath Day, grounded on the narrative that God rested on the seventh day after creating the world (Genesis 3:1-3). This forms a significant

concept in Christianity and Judaism, religious and theological works.<sup>1</sup> The divine resting data, as envisioned in Exodus 20:8-11, is considered by the religions to be a divine rhythm rather than a model for human beings to follow after weariness. It reflects the broader order of the world's creation by God, underscoring the notion of sanctification that sets a day apart for reflection and spiritual nourishment, as well as appreciating the sovereignty of God by following His commandment. The universal mandate of resting extended to humans, servants, and animals promotes equality and care for all of God's creation, capturing ethical and social dimensions.

However, despite the need to observe a resting day as described in Exodus 20:8-11, there has been a major concern, particularly among religious leaders undertaking pastoral duties in churches.<sup>2</sup> For too long, the churches have failed to achieve a work-life balance due to the demanding nature of their work. The Bishop of the Nairobi Chapel churches, Bishop Oscar Muriu, while responding to a question on the culture of the church, pointed out that one thing he regrets is setting up a culture of work, work, and more work without emphasizing intentional rest for the pastors.<sup>3</sup> This is not an isolated case but one among many, and the sad reality is that it cuts across many religious denominations, hence affecting thousands, if not millions, of pastors. This is a major challenge with most of the pastors in our churches, and, to make it worse, it is running many into burnout and ineffectiveness in ministry. This makes it important to observe the Sabbath day, particularly in the modern contemporary world characterized by intense work schedules and pressure to maintain high productivity among the pastors. Studying Exodus 20:8-11, considering the new covenant, will help the readers to observe the Sabbath rest from a point of knowledge and better understanding.

## 2. Discussion

This being an exegetical article, much work has been dedicated to looking keenly at Exodus 20: 8-11 which form the foundation of this article. A keen look at this text will show that the fourth commandment can be divided into four parts:

1. The command - Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy
2. The extension of the command - six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work, you, and your son, and your daughter, your man-servant, and your handmaid, and your cattle, and the sojourner who is within your gates.
3. The reason for the command- for six days God made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested in the seventh day; therefore
4. The implication of the command - therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath-day, and made it holy.

The literary context of Exodus 20:8-11 can be examined based on how the four parts of the Sabbath commandment fit in the Ten Commandments as a whole. To start with, it can be argued that the Sabbath commandment acts as a bridge between human interaction and God. In

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1 Jassen, Alex. "Tracing the Threads of Jewish Law: The Sabbath Carrying Prohibition from Jeremiah to the Rabbis." *Annali Di Storia Dell'Esegesi* 28, no. 1 (January 2011): 253-78.

2 Hough, Holly, Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell, Xin Liu, Carl Weisner, Elizabeth L. Turner, and Yao Jia. "Relationships between Sabbath Observance and Mental, Physical, and Spiritual Health in Clergy." *Pastoral Psychology* 68, no. 2 (April 2019): 171-93.

3 "Podcasts," Spotify, accessed November 6, 2023, <https://open.spotify.com/genre/podcasts-web>.

particular, commandments 1-3 emphasize the reverence for God, while the 5th -10th commandments relate to human interaction. While Commandments such as ‘Do not steal’ or ‘Do not commit adultery’ are rather brief and straightforward, the sabbath commandment can be further dissected into four more aspects: aspect of command, aspect of extension, reason, and implications.

The literary context of the Sabbath commandments can also be examined from within the Decalogue. The Decalogue as a whole serve as a constitutional document that outlines the obligations to God and one another.<sup>4</sup> Within this framework, the Sabbath serves as a recurring reminder of Israel’s reliance on God and his ability to provide for them even when they are resting. The Sabbath commandment also functions as a covenantal sign by identifying Israel as God’s chosen people. Exodus 31:13 notes that it is “a sign forever between me and the people of Israel,” thus marking the unique relationship between the children of Israel and God. In this regard, a covenantal significance sets the Sabbath apart from other commandments by establishing the commandment as a symbol of Israel’s identity and devotion to God.

### 3. Section-by-section exegesis of Exodus 20:8-11

It is worth noting that all the first three commandments start with ‘לֹא’ – denoting prohibition from doing specific things, while this command is positive in the opening (verse 8). Additionally, getting to this fourth commandment opens with an infinitive absolute, which is not the case with the first three commandments. Many scholars agree that the use of an infinitive absolute in this verse is to indicate emphasis. From the term *זָכוֹר*, the Sabbath emphasizes the importance of recalling and observing the resting day actively. This is critical, as the Sabbath was not merely an idea but a practical and sacred day intended to structure Israelite society<sup>5</sup>. In other words, the Sabbath day emphasizes the importance of the relationship between God and His people. This requires that the day must be kept holy, setting the day’s activities apart from daily activities, thereby dedicating it to God. This is well captured by the term *קִדְּשׁ*, which can be interpreted to mean consecration or sanctification, marking something as distinct and devoted to divine purposes.<sup>6</sup>

In verse 8, three essential words are worth attention. The first word is *זָכוֹר*, which in this verse and context denotes a number of issues: First, it shows that this is not the first time the children of Israel are hearing about what is to be remembered. According to The Bible Illustrator Commentary, “the first word of the Fourth Commandment reminds us that the Sabbath Day was already established among the Israelites when the law was delivered on Sinai.”<sup>7</sup> This is confirmed by the fact that there is a mention of the subject of remembrance in Exodus 16:23. It is not just a recall of information in the minds of the Israelites; remembering should propel them into taking a specific action. In this case, it entails an active, conscious effort to keep the Sabbath day holy rather than just having a passive recollection. Therefore, the emphasis on (*זָכוֹר*) suggests that the Sabbath is central to the Israelites' way of life rather than just a routine. Joshua Cockayne and Gideon Salter argue that this remembering is an act of having

<sup>4</sup> Donna Berman, “On Snowstorms and the Sabbath,” *The Living Pulpit* 7, no. 2 (December 31, 1998): 37.

<sup>5</sup> J. N. Sheveland, “Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight - By Norman Wirzba,” *RELIGIOUS STUDIES REVIEW* (Canada: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, January 1, 2008), 278.

<sup>6</sup> Viva Hammer, “Sabbath Alone,” *First Things* 267 (December 31, 2016): 19.

<sup>7</sup> “Exodus 20 - The Biblical Illustrator - Bible Commentaries,” StudyLight.org, accessed February 10, 2025, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/tbi/exodus-20.html>.

the content so clear in the mind. They do say that the word reconstruct would be used if it meant bringing to memory an event or something that was scantily remembered.<sup>8</sup>

The second term that is very important is the word Sabbath – שַׁבָּת. Lisa Renée Wilson, in an article titled ‘Created to Rest: A Theological Review of the Global Pause for the Covid-19 Pandemic,’ defines the sabbath as coming to a complete pause or halt.<sup>9</sup> The other terms given are to cease or desist. However, the most common interpretation is rest.

The third term for our consideration in this verse is לְקַדְּשׁוֹ. A more modern translation is to make it holy. This is in a Piel stem. This is indicated by the fact that the second letter in the stem is doubled. It is a factitive word - this means that the lord put the seventh day in a state of holiness. This is putting the subject in a specific state, i.e., in our case, in this verse, to make the Sabbath day sanctified. Exodus 20:8 commands Israelites to maintain holiness during the Sabbath by treating the day as distinct, separate from ordinary days, and specifically dedicated to worshipping God.<sup>10</sup> From the view of a liturgical perspective, לְקַדְּשׁוֹ suggests the need or importance of conducting specific rituals or keeping specific actions to honor the Sabbath's holiness.

Verses 9 and 10 of Exodus 20:8-11 emphasize six days of labor followed by one day of rest. To understand verse 9, two phrases are key, and one other issue will be examined here. These phrases include: תַּעֲבֹד (you will labour) and מְלֶאכֶתְךָ (your work). Generally speaking, the two words, labour, and work, can be used interchangeably or synonymously. Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature Dictionary<sup>11</sup> shows that labour is not necessarily a result of the curse but rather a necessary component of human life. The same root word used in verse 9 for labour is the same used in Genesis 2: 15, and this was before the fall of man. Labour can be a verb or a noun. In our case, in verse 9, it is a verb. Having six days of work and labour followed by a day of the sabbath (rest) aligns well with the pattern established in the creation narrative as envisioned in Genesis 1-2<sup>12</sup>. In this regard, and as indicated in the scriptures, God created the heavens and earth and all that is in them in six days while He rested on the seventh day. “Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day, God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. (Gen 2:1-3)”. Accordingly, this acts as the basis through which the Sabbath law is established, rooting human labor in divine activity.

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<sup>8</sup> Joshua Cockayne and Gideon Salter, “FEASTS OF MEMORY: COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING, LITURGICAL TIME TRAVEL AND THE ACTUALISATION OF THE PAST,” *Modern Theology* 37, no. 2 (December 31, 2021): 276, <https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12683>.

<sup>9</sup> Yoel Kretzmer-Raziel, Yoel Kretzmer-Raziel, and יואל קרצמר-רזיאל, “The Impact of Purity Laws on Amoraic Laws Concerning Handling on the Sabbath,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 87 (January 1, 2016): 179–202.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur W. Pink, “The Ten Commandments Arthur W. Pink [Text],” 43

<sup>11</sup> John McClintock 1814-1870. and James Strong 1822-1894., “Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature : Supplement /,” January 1, 1885, <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=d6755a0f-afb4-3e7e-b7cb-e624de763b32>.

<sup>12</sup> Joshua King, “Sabbath Keeping as Metaphor in the Gospel of Thomas,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (December 31, 2019): 644.

Verse 10 opens with a waw disjunctive, hence the majority of the Bible translations available have it as ‘but’. According to Ross, when a waw is combined with a noun, most likely it will be a waw disjunctive. This means that there is a contrast between what had been stated before and what will be said after the disjunctive. In my interpretation, a waw disjunctive is supposed to communicate a clear construct between two statements. Following this verse, it is clear that “not only are the Israelites themselves required to stop their labour, but the commandment is extended to children, slaves, and even as far as the livestock and foreigners who reside within their borders”<sup>13</sup> מְלָאכָה describes the work that is permitted during the first six days but prohibited on the seventh<sup>14</sup>. Haynes and Kruger put it this way: “Swanson provides a bit more nuance, suggesting that מְעֻשָּׂה focuses on the energy that is expended in the accomplishment of work, while מְלָאכָה spends its energy drawing attention to the work itself. Even so, the difference is slight, and Swanson attributes both to the same semantic field”<sup>15</sup> The phrase “Sabbath to the Lord your God” (שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה, *šabbāt layhwh*) found in Exodus 20:10 indicates the core tenet of the idea that the Sabbath is not only a break from work but also a day set apart for God. It is important to look keenly at the phrase לַיהוָה and to establish the use of the lamed here. According to a book written by Arnold and Choi – A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax – this lamed can be put in the category of interest/advantage lamed. This shows that the sabbath is towards or to the lord.<sup>16</sup> Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible suggests that the sabbath day should be treated “As a holy day, set apart to the honor of the holy God, and to be spent in holy exercises. God, by blessing it, had made it holy; they, by solemnly blessing him, must keep it holy and not alienate it to any other purpose than that for which the difference between it and other days was instituted.”<sup>17</sup> Also, in his book, Analytical Key to the Old Testament, Owen renders this lamed as ‘to’ pointing to His direction.<sup>18</sup> A lamed preposition can be interpreted to mean that the Sabbath is not merely for human rest or well-being but rather a day devoted entirely to worshipping Yahweh. As such, and based on the lamed preposition, the Sabbath’s theological foundation is anchored on divine institutions and not social or cultural tenets/principles. It is this verse that links the observance of the Sabbath with the worship of God. This means that the observance of the Sabbath would be a sign of reverence to God. In this case, it can be argued that the Sabbath played a role in establishing a connection between God’s creatures’ physical rest to something deeper, which is God’s sovereignty and His design for the world.<sup>19</sup> By keeping the Sabbath, the Israelites were reminded weekly of their dependence on God’s provision and their trust in His care. It wasn’t just a legal requirement; it was an expression of their relationship with God. It underscored the belief that they didn’t need to work every single day to survive because they had a covenant with the

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew Haynes and P. Paul Krüger, “Creation Rest: Exodus 20:8-11 and the First Creation Account,” *Old Testament Essays* 31, no. 1 (2018): 101, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2018/v31n1a6>.

<sup>14</sup> Haynes and Krüger, 101.

<sup>15</sup> Haynes and Krüger, 104.

<sup>16</sup> Bill T. Arnold, “A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax / Bill T. Arnold, John H. Choi. [Text],” January 1, 2003, 123–24, <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=0dba093d-75a7-30df-8b54-527f7c853084>.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold, 110.

<sup>18</sup> John Joseph Owens, “Analytical Key to the Old Testament / John Joseph Owens. [Text],” January 1, 1989, 326, <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=088e1225-c664-39e3-a035-084e6a5ec75f>.

<sup>19</sup> Gary G Cohen, “THE DOCTRINE OF THE SABBATH IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS,” n.d., 8.



Creator, who had rested, and in doing so, established a pattern for human life to follow. This resting day was considered sacred, a reminder about honoring the One (God) who made all things and trusted and adhered to His commandments.<sup>20</sup>

Exodus 20:11 is an echo of Genesis Chapter 2:1-3. The *וְ* conjunction, interpreted as ‘for,’ opening this verse gives us a reason why the children of Israel were to observe the Sabbath by not doing any form of work in it, neither them nor anyone living with them, even including the animals. In other words, ensuring that there is total rest for all. Haynes and Kruger put it this way: “The *וְ* beginning v. 11 is causative and describes the motivation for the commandment as a whole. The Sabbath is reflective of YHWH’s activity in creation. As the purpose of God’s creational activity is the rest that marks the seventh day, so this rest finds prominent status in the fourth commandment as well.”<sup>21</sup>

Looking keenly at the phrase *וַיָּנַח* from the root *נָח*, which is translated as ‘and rested,’ it is noteworthy that it is different from the phrase used in Genesis 2 to show that God rested after he was done with the work of creation. In Genesis, we have *וַיָּשָׁבֶת* from the root word *שָׁבַת* ‘and he rested’. This is a surprising fact for many scholars since both texts are talking about the same account; it would be expected that we would have the same phrase for God’s rest in both instances.<sup>22</sup> The use of *שָׁבַת* after the creation account describes a rest/cessation from the work of creation that took six days. This shows that it describes resting from a particular activity/work. “The use of *נָח* in Exodus 20:11 further describes a cessation of movement or a settling down into a stable environment. Thus, the seventh day of Genesis 2 and the description of it in Exodus 20 are both marked by a cessation of particular labor, but Exodus 20 further specifies that it was also meant to be enjoyed in an environment of stability and safety. The use of *נָח* in Exodus 20 also suggests something further.”<sup>23</sup> The rest described here is a cessation from all manner of work, whether it is the responsibility that man had before the fall in the Garden of Eden or the hard labor that came as a result of the curse in Genesis 3. In other words, the kind of rest seems to encompass all the aspects of human labor.

Some researchers and scholars hold divergent views. To some, cessation of work as envisioned in the Sabbath commandment could be perceived as a way of showing God’s sovereignty and ability to provide.<sup>24</sup> The Sabbath symbolized a shift in Israel from relying on their labor to dependence on divine provision. From this, it can be argued that rest would entail refraining from human efforts that would be perceived to compete with God’s rightful claim over time and existence, with the Sabbath day set aside as a day in which humans were to relinquish control and appreciate God’s power to provide. On the other hand, Posadas integrates the concept of work from a broader perspective as an act of cultural and spiritual liberation. This

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<sup>20</sup> Brevard S. Childs, “The Book of Exodus; a Critical, Theological Commentary / [by] Brevard S. Childs.,” January 1, 1974, 416–17, <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=a8960717-ba4c-3df8-a92b-a4a63fd85b81>.

<sup>21</sup> Haynes and Krüger, “Creation Rest,” 103.

<sup>22</sup> Francis Nigel Lee, “The Covenantal Sabbath Francis Nigel Lee. [Text],” January 1, 1974, 27, <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=251fe115-5d99-3051-9752-0243ed67dc9a>.

<sup>23</sup> Haynes and Krüger, “Creation Rest,” 108.

<sup>24</sup> Marva J. Dawn, “Keeping the Sabbath Wholly : Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting / Marva J. Dawn.,” January 1, 1989, 209, <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=08c848b7-d2b0-387a-be58-9d5a88b69ac3>.

is based on the argument that the Sabbath is a resting day that disrupts the human tendency to define their identity through productive activities.<sup>25</sup>

There is a notable inclusion in this command. Just as it started with the sanctification of the sabbath in verse 8, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” (ESV) it closes with the same in verse 11, “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (ESV). Haynes and Kruger put it this way: “Exodus 20:11 begins with YHWH’s creative activity and ends by describing the blessedness and sanctification of the seventh day. The reversal forms an inclusion and ends the fourth commandment where it began in 20:8, with the sanctification of the seventh day.”<sup>26</sup> Of several factors that make the sabbath a unique day, in my view, the greatest is the fact that the Lord sanctified the day and blessed it. Cassuto put it this way in his commentary on the book of Exodus: “He uplifted it, raising it high above the level of other days. Hence, it is also your duty to sanctify the Sabbath, just as the Lord did, and to rest thereon just as He did.”<sup>27</sup> To sanctify is to make it distinct and unique from others. In other words, it is to set it apart, and more so for a specific purpose. To bless in this context would mean to favor the sabbath above the other six days. Cassuto holds the view that, when God blessed the sabbath day, he made it a source of blessing for man, and hence man should treat it in a hallowed manner.<sup>28</sup> This connects the day with the Lord who initiated the day for the children of Israel by first practicing just as it is documented in Genesis 2:1-3.

Exodus 20:8-11 is unique compared to other commandments in the sense that it is highly detailed and lengthy. The other commands are relatively short, concise, and direct compared to the Sabbath commandment. Among the explanations for the longevity and detail is that the Sabbath is time-bound and thus requires an in-depth explanation to emphasize its observance. Durham put it this way in his commentary on the fourth commandment “The fourth command is the longest in the Decalogue because it is the most expanded of all the commandments. The probable reason for the expansion is the difficulty the people of Israel had keeping it.”<sup>29</sup> It is imperative to restate that the Sabbath does not just represent a one day off from work but rather a sacred institution anchored on theological significance. Accordingly, the Sabbath command required an in-depth explanation distinguishing it from other forms of rest or leisure as well as other commandments. On the other hand, it can be argued that the Sabbath is a key sign of the covenant between God and Israel. This makes it important to be delineated, unlike other commandments that deal with moral obligation and commandments.

Other scholars hold the view that the Exodus and Deuteronomy versions of the Sabbath commandment complement each other. To this end, it can be argued that Deuteronomy 5:12-15 enriches the understanding of the Sabbath by adding the theme of redemption to the theme

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<sup>25</sup> Jeremy D Posadas, “THE REFUSAL OF WORK IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND THEOLOGY: Interpreting Work from an Anti-Work Perspective,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 45, no. 2 (December 31, 2017): 332.

<sup>26</sup> Haynes and Krüger, “Creation Rest,” 106.

<sup>27</sup> Umberto Cassuto, “A Commentary on the Book of Exodus. / Translated from the Hebrew by Israel Abrahams.,” January 1, 1967, 246, <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=a304cfba-b62b-39bf-9014-d1861a0caf97>.

<sup>28</sup> Cassuto, 246.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Pons, “John I. Durham : Exodus. (Word Biblical Commentary 3.) Waco, Tx, 1987, Word Books,” *Études théologiques et religieuses* 63, no. 1 (January 1, 1988): 288.

of creation found in Exodus.<sup>30</sup> The Sabbath is thus seen as both a celebration of God's creative power and a commemoration of His redemptive action in history, with ethical implications for how the community treats its most vulnerable members. Nonetheless, some, such as Jassen and Alex, noted that Deuteronomy 5:12-15 provides a shift in rationale from creation to redemption. Exodus 20:8-11 presents an evolving perspective on theological concerns of the Israelite community, while Deuteronomy, on the other hand, is highly focused on the ethical implications of Israel's history.<sup>31</sup>

Exodus 20:8-11 provides profound ethical, practical, and theological implications for individuals, churches, and communities. Starting with theological implications, it can be argued that, as stipulated in the text of Exodus 20:11, the theological foundation is rooted in the character and actions of God. In other words, the Sabbath commandment is deeply rooted in the creation narrative, in which the Creator (God) rested on the seventh day. This can be considered to serve as a model among God's servants to set aside a day to worship and reflect on the sovereignty of God. This is also well evidenced in modern times, where observing the Sabbath has become an act of faith among some religions and communities. The Sabbath acts as a reminder that God is the ultimate provider. This encourages reliance on God rather than human effort and material accumulation, as was the case during the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt.

Ethically, Exodus 20:8-11 promotes social justice, equality, and human dignity among the communities. This is well captured by the scriptures' emphasis that all members of society, including servants, foreigners, and even animals, should observe the Sabbath. The universality of resting during the Sabbath day can be interpreted to show the value of all people irrespective of their social status or economic status, as well as the importance of maintaining human dignity. In other words, as previously stated, the Sabbath commandment focuses on resisting the exploitation of workers, the core aspect of fair and dignified treatment of all people. Sabbath, therefore, ensures that no one is subjected to constant labor and denied an opportunity for resting. In a modern context, the Sabbath can be seen through the lens of the advocacy of labor practices and policies that protect workers' rights and fair wages, as well as the promotion of work-life balance. The New Testament Sabbath's fulfillment can be found in Christ. However, it is important to note that the core values of the Sabbath values remain instructive and formative for modern life. Having a rhythm of rest would help in reducing, if not stopping, the cases of burnout, more so among the people who have been absorbed in the systems of work and more work.

Spiritually, Exodus 20:8-11, the Sabbath commandment emphasizes the need and importance of setting aside regular time or a day for worship and rest. This is well evidenced in the phrase "keep it holy," as it can be seen in the text Exodus 20:8. This gives a reflection of the sacredness of the Sabbath as a day devoted to God. Accordingly, this has direct implications for how believers structure their lives, particularly by reminding the need to prioritize their relationship with God and set aside time for their spiritual renewal. Relating this to modern times, it can be argued that the Sabbath serves as a countercultural reminder of the need for rest and reflection

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<sup>30</sup> Charles E. Bradford, "Sabbath Roots : The African Connection, a Biblical Perspective Charles E. Bradford.," 79, accessed February 17, 2025, <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=91b60d59-1e40-3447-b668-8ca25016c9c1>.

<sup>31</sup> Alex Jassen, "Tracing the Threads of Jewish Law: The Sabbath Carrying Prohibition from Jeremiah to the Rabbis," *Annali Di Storia Dell'Esegesi* 28, no. 1 (December 31, 2011): 254.



despite it being celebrated on Sundays rather than on Saturdays. This is more so due to the huge focus on material things achieved through a glorified working culture. In other words, Sabbath fosters personal renewal, physically and emotionally, as people take a break from their daily lives of working. In the context of churches, the Sabbath provides a model for corporate worship and communal life among the worshippers. In other words, it can be argued that the Sabbath calls for regular rhythms of rest and worship. In this context, people or worshippers are expected or commanded to set aside time each week to cease their labors to reflect on their relationship with God and also reflect on spiritual vitality. Accordingly, for the church, Sabbath observance serves as a model for worship, community life, and social witness, while in the context of society, the principles of the Sabbath offer a blueprint on how to address issues of forced labor, overworking, and inequality in the broader society.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the exegesis of Exodus 20:8-11 shows very rich theological, ethical, spiritual, and social implications of the Sabbath commandment. As indicated in the discussion, the Sabbath serves as a constant reminder of God's sovereignty and ability to provide, thus encouraging trust in His care and fostering spiritual renewal by resting or setting aside a day for resting. For the church and general society, it can be concluded that the Sabbath provides a comprehensive model for worshipping and community life, as well as advocacy for social justice and equality amongst all people.

#### 5. Recommendations

Although Exodus 20:8-11 has been extensively covered in this study, it is, however, to further broaden the study. This can be achieved by conducting a study on comparative Analysis of the Sabbath both in the Old and the New Testaments. This would help in having an in-depth understanding of the Sabbath in the context of Mosaic law and the context of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, as well as the transition to the observance of the Sabbath on Sundays among Christians.

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