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### Why Did God Give the Sabbath?

The concept of Sabbath in the Old Testament is a significant religious practice that is addressed in various passages such as Exod 20:8-11, 35:2-3; Num 15:32-36; Deut 5:12-15; Jer 17:21-22, and Neh 13:15-16. In this essay, I will address the purpose of God giving the Sabbath, what is specifically forbidden on the Sabbath according to Exod 20:8-11, and compare it to the passages in Numbers, Jeremiah, and Nehemiah. Additionally, I will provide my perspective on whether the command to obey the Sabbath is still valid today and which day is the Sabbath.

God gave the Sabbath as a day of rest, a holy day set apart from the rest of the week. According to Exod 20:8-11 and Deut 5:12-15, God commanded the Israelites to keep the Sabbath day holy and to remember that He rested on the seventh day of creation. The Sabbath was a sign of the covenant between God and Israel, reminding them of God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. It was a time for the Israelites to rest and reflect on their relationship with God and to worship Him.

Exod 20:8-11 specifically forbids any work to be done on the Sabbath day, including farming, cooking, or traveling. In contrast, Num 15:32-36 describes a man who was caught gathering wood on the Sabbath day and was stoned to death for breaking the Sabbath. Similarly, in Jer 17:21-22, God warns the people not to carry any burden

on the Sabbath day, while in Neh 13:15-16, Nehemiah rebukes the people for buying and selling on the Sabbath day.

Regarding the question of whether the command to obey the Sabbath is still valid today, opinions vary among different religious traditions. Some Christians believe that the Sabbath has been replaced by Sunday as a day of worship, while others argue that the Sabbath is still valid and should be observed on Saturday. However, it is essential to note that the New Testament provides a different perspective on the Sabbath. Jesus frequently challenged the Pharisees' legalistic interpretation of the Sabbath and emphasized the Sabbath's purpose as a day of rest and a time for doing good to others (Matt 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-11).

In my opinion, the Sabbath's principle of taking a day of rest and worshiping God is still relevant and beneficial for our lives today. However, I do not believe that observing the Sabbath on a particular day of the week is necessary. Instead, we should prioritize taking a day of rest and devoting time to worship and reflection, regardless of the day of the week.

In conclusion, the Sabbath was a crucial religious practice in the Old Testament, designed to remind the Israelites of God's covenant and deliverance. Exod 20:8-11 forbids any work to be done on the Sabbath day, while other passages describe various activities that are not allowed on the Sabbath. While opinions differ on the validity of observing the Sabbath today, the principle of taking a day of rest and worshiping God remains relevant and beneficial for our spiritual lives.

