What is the meaning of Exodus (Shemot) 16:29?

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In Shemot 16 we find the Israelites in the wilderness. They are hungry and grumbling that life was so much better in Egypt than being free and following YHWH. They were grumbling to Aharon and Moshe but they said to them you grumble not against us but YHWH. It is then YHWH speaks to Moshe and says…

Exodus (Shemot) 16:11-16

11 YHWH Spoke to Moshe, saying: 12 I have harkened to the grumblings of the Children of Israel—speak to them, and say: Between the setting-times you shall eat flesh, and at daybreak you shall be satisfied with bread, and you shall know that I am YHWH your God (Elohim). 13 Now it was at sunset a horde-of-quail came up and covered the camp. And at daybreak there was a layer of dew around the camp; 14 and when the layer of dew went up, here, upon the surface of the wilderness, something fine, scaly, fine as hoar-frost upon the land. 15 When the Children of Israel saw it they said each-man to his brother: Mahn hu/What is it? For they did not know what it was. Moshe said to them: It is the bread that YHWH has given you for eating. 16 This is the word that YHWH has commanded: Glean from it, each-man according to what he can eat, an omer per capita, according to the number of your persons, each-man, for those in his tent, you are to take. (The Schocken Bible)

Each morning they gleaned what they needed. On the sixth day they were told to glean a double portion. Moshe instructed them…

Shemot 16:23

23 He said to them: It is what YHWH spoke about: tomorrow is a Sabbath/Ceasing, a Sabbath of Holiness for YHWH. Whatever you wish to bake—bake, and whatever you wish to boil—boil; and all the surplus, put aside from yourselves in safekeeping until morning. 24 they put it aside until morning, as Moshe had commanded, and it did not reek, neither were there any maggots in it. 25 Moshe said: Eat it today, for today you will not find it in the field. 26 For six days you are to glean, but on the seventh day is Sabbath, there will not be any on it. 27 But it was on the seventh day that some of the people went out to glean, and they did not find. 28 YHWH said to Moshe: Until when will you (people) refuse to keep my commandments and my instructions? (The Schocken Bible)

This brings us to the verse we will be focusing on today. Shemot 16:29

29 You see that YHWH has given you the Sabbath, therefore on the sixth day, he gives you bread for two days. Stay, each man, in his spot (place); no man shall go out from his place on the seventh day! (The Schocken Bible)
We will focus in on the second part of this verse. What does it mean by staying in one place and not go out from the place on the Shabbat? Does this mean we should not leave our home? Today we will look at what the Hebrew says and look at what is being said here.

Shavoo (3427) aiysh (376) tachataym (8478) al (480) yatza’ (5927) aiysh (376) mimakomo (4725) bayom (3117) ha-shavee-ee (7637)

Remain man in his place not go up man from his place in that very day seventh.

The two words we will be focusing on are tachat (8478) and makom (4725).

Tachat (8478) is a noun masculine found in the BDB (Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew English Lexicon) on page 1065.

We will be specifically looking at 2a in the BDB. Which is where this word is used with a reflective pronoun as an idiom. So what is a reflective pronoun and what is an idiom?

Reflexive-Pronoun is a pronoun referring to the subject of the sentence, clause, or verbal phrase in which it stands; specifically: a personal pronoun compounded with −self. In this case the personal pronoun is man (aiysh).

Idiom is a speech form or expression of a given language that is particular to itself grammatically or can not be understood from its individual meaning of its elements. It is like the phrase “Jim has a really cool car” the word cool is used as an idiom. On face value it would be taken as cool as in not quite warm but not cold. But for most of use today we understand this as great, nice, something desirable.

So to see the meaning of this word we must look for other uses of this word as an idiom in the Tanakh. All verses quoted are from the JPS Tanakh 1985 unless otherwise stated.

Leviticus (VaYikra) 13:23

23But if the discoloration remains stationay, not having spread, it is the scar of the inflammation; the priest shall pronounce him clean.

Leviticus (VaYikra) 13:28

28But if the discoloration has remained stationary, not having spread on the skin, and it is faded, it is the swelling from the burn. The priest shall pronounce him clean, for it is the scar of the burn.

Joshua (Yehoshua) 5:8

8After the circumcising of the whole nation was completed, they remained where they were, in the camp, until they recovered.
Joshua (Yehoshua) 6:5

5 And when a long blast is sounded on the horn—as soon as you hear that sound of the horn—all the people shall give a mighty shout. Thereupon the city wall will collapse, and the people shall advance, every man straight ahead.”

Joshua (Yehoshua) 6:20

20 So the people shouted when the horns were sounded. When the people heard the sound of the horns, the people raised a mighty shout and the wall collapsed. The people rushed into the city, every man straight in front of him, and they captured the city.

Judges (Shofetim) 7:21

21 They remained standing where they were, surrounding the camp; but the entire camp ran about yelling, and took to flight.

I Samuel (Shemuel) 14:9

9 If they say to us, ‘Wait until we get to you,’ then we’ll stay where we are, and not go up to them.

2 Samuel (Shemuel) 2:23

23 When he refused to desist, Abner struck him in the belly with a backward thrust of his spear and the spear protruded from his back. He fell there and died on the spot. And all who came to the place where Asahel fell and died halted;

Jeremiah (Yermiyahu) 38:9

9 “O lord king, those men have acted wickedly in all they did to the prophet Jeremiah; they have put him down in the pit, to die there of hunger.” For there was no more bread in the city.

Isaiah (Yeshayahu) 25:10

10 For the hand of the LORD shall descend Upon this mount, And Moab shall be trampled under Him As straw is threshed to bits at Madmenah.

Isaiah (Yeshayahu) 46:7

7 They must carry it on their backs and transport it; When they put it down, it stands, It does not budge from its place. If they cry out to it, it does not answer; It cannot save them from their distress.
Habakkuk 3:16

16I heard and my bowels quaked, My lips quivered at the sound; Rot entered into my bone, I trembled where I stood. Yet I wait calmly for the day of distress, For a people to come to attack us.

Zechariah 12:6

6In that day, I will make the clans of Judah like a flaming brazier among sticks and like a flaming torch among sheaves. They shall devour all the besieging peoples right and left; and Jerusalem shall continue on its site, in Jerusalem.

From these we can see that it describes a kind of place like something that has a position whether it be the falling of a wall, place of a city, or a person being is their place or spot. So with this in mind, let look at other word translated as place which is…

Makom (4725) it is also a noun masculine which is found in the BDB on page 879.

1. It can be standing place.

Exodus (Shemot) 3:5

5And He said, “Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground.

Exodus (Shemot) 33:21

21And the LORD said, “See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock

Genesis (Bereshit) 19:27

27Next morning, Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood before the LORD,

2. A station or position

Joshua (Yehoshua) 8:19

19As soon as he held out his hand, the ambush came rushing out of their station. They entered the city and captured it; and they swiftly set fire to the city.

2 Samuel (Shemuel) 11:16

16So when Joab was besieging the city, he stationed Uriah at the point where he knew that there were able warriors.
3. A Place or Position

Genesis (Bereshit) 29:3

3When all the flocks were gathered there, the stone would be rolled from the mouth of the well and the sheep watered; then the stone would be put back in its place on the mouth of the well.

I Samuel (Shemuel) 5:3

3Early the next day, the Ashdodites found Dagon lying face down on the ground in front of the Ark of the LORD. They picked Dagon up and put him back in his place;

4. Place of Human Abode (Dwelling Place)

Genesis (Bereshit) 13:14

14And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had parted from him, “Raise your eyes and look out from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west,

Genesis (Bereshit) 20:13

13So when God made me wander from my father’s house, I said to her, ‘Let this be the kindness that you shall do me: whatever place we come to, say there of me: He is my brother.’”

5. A City

Genesis (Bereshit) 20:11

11“I thought,” said Abraham, “surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.

Genesis (Bereshit) 18:24

24What if there should be fifty innocent within the city; will You then wipe out the place and not forgive it for the sake of the innocent fifty who are in it?

6. A plot of land
Then Solomon began to build the House of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where [the LORD] had appeared to his father David, at the place which David had designated, at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

“For in that day, every spot where there could stand a thousand vines worth a thousand shekels of silver shall become a wilderness of thornbush and thistle.

Why did you make us leave Egypt to bring us to this wretched place, a place with no grain or figs or vines or pomegranates? There is not even water to drink!”

They pass through the Valley of Baca, regarding it as a place of springs, as if the early rain had covered it with blessing.

Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is present in this place, and I did not know it!” Shaken, he said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven.”

When the Jews living near them would arrive, they would tell us time and again “... from all the places where ... you shall come back to us....” I stationed, on the lower levels of the place, behind the walls, on the bare rock—I stationed the people by families with their swords, their lances, and their bows.

When you hear a trumpet call, gather yourselves to me at that place; our God will fight for us!”
9. in or about the tabernacle (place)

Leviticus (Vayikra) 6:9

What is left of it shall be eaten by Aaron and his sons; it shall be eaten as unleavened cakes, in the sacred precinct; they shall eat it in the enclosure of the Tent of Meeting.

Exodus (Shemot) 29:31-32

You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in the sacred precinct; and Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

10. Sleeping Place

I Samuel (Shemuel) 3:2

One day, Eli was asleep in his usual place; his eyes had begun to fail and he could barely see.

I Samuel (Shemuel) 3:9

And Eli said to Samuel, “Go lie down. If you are called again, say, ’speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.’” And Samuel went to his place and lay down.

We can see that Makom (Place) can refer to the place were you stand or sleep, a piece of land, a city, a land, or a region. But what is being referred to here in Exodus 16:29. Remember, Tachat was referred to as describing a kind of place like something that has a position. But what place is being talked about here?

Remember Shemot 16:13

13 Now it was at sunset a horde-of-quail came up and covered the camp. And at daybreak there was a layer of dew around the camp; (Schocken Bible)

Reference 5439 is saviyy, which has the meaning of around, or encircling. It this case the Mahnah was encircling the camp.

What happened on the seventh day?

Exodus (Shemot) 16:26-27

26 For six days you are to glean, but on the seventh day is Sabbath, there will not be any on it. 27 But it was on the seventh day that some of the people went out to glean, and they did not find.
They left the camp to find the Mahn hu. That then brings us back to the command in Exodus (Shemot) 16:29

29 You see that YHWH has given you the Sabbath, therefore on the sixth day, he gives you bread for two days. Stay, each man, in his spot (place); no man shall go out from his place on the seventh day! (The Schocken Bible)

The place referred to here is the Camp. So they were to stay in the in his spot (position) of the camp (place).

We have other evidence that they were allowed to be out of their dwelling on the Shabbat.

Numbers (Bamidbar) 15:32

32 Once, when the Israelites were in the wilderness, they came upon a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. 33 Those who found him as he was gathering wood brought him before Moses, Aaron, and the whole community. 34 He was placed in custody, for it had not been specified what should be done to him. 35 Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man shall be put to death: the whole community shall pelt him with stones outside the camp.” 36 So the whole community took him outside the camp and stoned him to death—as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Notice that those that found him found him gathering wood. It was during the Sabbath they found him.

Another reference to going out on the Shabbat is 2 Kings (Melakhim) 4:23

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

She was going to Elisha that day because of her son but notice she must have regularly went to see him on the Shabbat.

We can go out of our homes on the Shabbat. We would in times past have gone to see each other in our community. Visited with family. Hear the words of the Prophet speaking on the Shabbat. Read outside on a nice day. Lie in the grass and think on this His creation.