

# A. Sabbath. Day's. Journey

## How far were the Jews allowed to walk on the Sabbath Day?

The Sabbath Day, Saturday, was a day set apart by God for His people as a day of rest. The Israelites were not to perform any unnecessary "work" on Sabbath.

Lev 23:3 "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling places.

Although not specifically mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jewish rabbis enforced a walking restriction on Sabbath. An individual was only allowed to walk a certain distance before it was considered "work."

This rabbinic tradition is referenced in Acts 1:12. After Jesus' ascension to Heaven, Luke wrote that the Apostles walked "a Sabbath day's journey" from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem.

So, how far was too far? Using verses like Exodus 16:29 and Numbers 35:4-5, the rabbis legislated a Sabbath walking limit of 2,000 cubits.

- A cubit was approximately 18 inches.
- 2,000 cubits is approximately 3,000 feet.
- 2,000 cubits is approximately .57 miles.
- 2,000 cubits is approximately .91 kilometers.

The 2,000 cubit limit matches distance from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. According to the Jewish historian Josephus (Ant., XX, viii, 6), the Mount of Olives was 5 furlongs from Jerusalem.

- A furlong was approximately 607 feet (equal to the Roman stade/stadium).
- Interesting fact: The furlong (meaning furrow length) was the distance a team of oxen could plough without resting (Zupko, British weights & measures: a history from antiquity to the seventeenth century).
- $607 \text{ ft} * 5 = 3035 \text{ feet} = .575 \text{ miles}$  (almost exactly 2,000 cubits, a Sabbath day's journey).

In conclusion, a "Sabbath day's journey" allowed a person to walk approximately 2,000 cubits from their home on any given Saturday. However, it is important to remember that this rule was a creation of the Jewish religious teachers, not a law from God.