

## THE SABBATH BEFORE SINAI

There is strong opposition to the teaching that the Sabbath existed before the giving of the Ten Commandments (or Ten Words) to Moses on Mount Sinai. But there are scriptures that prove the Sabbath did exist prior to Sinai.

Forty-five days after leaving Egypt, hunger came upon the children of Israel and they complained to Moses and Aaron of their hardship: ***“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”*** Exodus 16: 2, 3. When God heard their murmurings, He instructed Moses to tell the children of Israel that He would rain bread from heaven: ***“And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings.”*** Exodus 16:8. The Israelites were told to take a portion at the gathering, according to their eating. An omer for every man. When God had spoken to Moses, He had given him special instruction for the Israelites to perform a task: ***“And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.”*** Exodus 16:5. Why were the Israelites told to gather twice as much bread on the sixth day (ie. Friday)? The following verses give the answer: ***“And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe: and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning... And Moses said, Eat that today: for today is a sabbath unto the LORD: today ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it: but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.”*** Exodus 16:22, 23, 25, 26. The double portion was given to the Israelites that they would not have to go out and gather bread on the sabbath day.

These events happened before Moses went up to Mount Sinai in the third month to receive God’s law on the two hewn tables of stone. The number of weeks between the raining of the bread to the ascending of Mount Sinai is not precisely known. All the information we have is on the fifteenth day of the second month, the Israelites came into the wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:1) and then in the third month, they came into the wilderness of Sinai.

There is another period mentioned in the third month of three days: ***“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon***

**Mount Sinai.**” Exodus 19:10, 11. The preceding verses make us aware of the fact that the sabbath was being observed before the giving of the Ten Words in the wilderness of Sin before their arrival into the wilderness of Sinai. The time element gives proof by the mention of the six weeks and in the third month.

Going back to when the Israelites were in the wilderness of Sin, we read from the Bible that the people were told not to go out on the Sabbath to gather manna, but some of the people disobeyed: **“And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?”** Exodus 16:27, 28. From the phrasing of “How long refuse ye...” that the Sabbath was known to the Israelites long before the manna occurrence; it implies the lack of Sabbath observance was an ongoing issue with the people of Israel. The occurrence of some of the people not observing the Sabbath in the wilderness of Sin leaves no doubt that the Sabbath existed before being written on the hewn stones given to Moses on Mount Sinai. For the complete story, read Exodus 16:1 to 36

While Moses and the children of Israel were still in bondage in Egypt, Moses and Aaron, on instruction from God, approached Pharaoh for the release of the Israelites. After Pharaoh’s refusal to release them, he, Pharaoh, accused Moses and Aaron of telling the people to rest from their works. Read Exodus 5:5. **“And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.”** Were Moses and Aaron now telling the people to observe the seventh day Sabbath? In this instance, we cannot make a positive answer of ‘yes’. Although the word “rest” used in this verse indicates an ordinary stoppage of work, the person can continue to participate in his or her own social activities. The word “rest” used in the preceding text was translated from “shabath” in the Hebrew tongue and has the meaning to cease from all exertion.

It is because of the word “shabath” (or rest) being used in this verse that gives strong credence to the belief that Moses and Aaron instructed the people of Israel to keep God’s seventh-day Sabbath. The word “shabbath” (ie. Sabbath) comes from the word “shabath” (ie. rest) and where it is used in the Old Testament, it is used in conjunction with the seventh day. From Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, we read the following: **“#7673 – Shabath – rest: a prim. root; to repose, ie. desist from exertion; used in many impl. Relations (caus. Fig. Or spec.): - (cause to, let, make to) cease, celebrate, cause (make) to fall, keep (sabbath) suffer to be lacking, leave put away (down), (make to) rest, rid, still, take away. # 7676 – Shabbath – sabbath – inten. from 7673; intermission, ie. (spec.) the Sabbath; (every) Sabbath.”**

For those who would suggest that the Sabbath was not known before God gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, it is clear that a Sabbath was known and God wanted His people to observe it: **“REMEMBER the sabbath day...”** Exodus 20:8.5