

Adult
Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide
July | Aug | Sept 2025

EXODUS



Justin

Contents

Exodus: Journey With God

1. Moses: The Early Years—June 28–July 4	4
2. The Burning Bush—July 5–11	12
3. A Hard Start—July 12–18	20
4. God Punishes Egypt—July 19–25	28
5. Passover—July 26–August 1	36
6. Crossing the Red Sea—August 2–8	44
7. The Bread and Water of Life—August 9–15	52
8. Promise at Sinai—August 16–22	60
9. Living the Law—August 23–29	68
10. The Promise and the Building Plan—August 30–September 5	76
11. Praying for People Who Reject God—September 6–12	84
12. “Please Show Me Your Glory”—September 13–19	92
13. The Holy Tent—September 20–26	100

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Introduction



The Book of Exodus: Journey to the Promised Land

In the book of Exodus, we read about our loving Lord who saves His people at the promised time (Genesis 15:12–16). God made this promise to Abraham more than four hundred years before. The time when God helps His people escape from slavery in Egypt is named the Exodus. The Exodus from Egypt and then Israel's crossing the Red Sea were wonderful miracles and acts. These acts were the most amazing things that happened in the history of ancient Israel until the Cross. The story about the Exodus is the Good News about Jesus in Old Testament times.

God again and again worked miracles to show how much He loved His people. God's heart was full of forgiveness for His people, even when they sinned against Him. With His amazing power, the Lord led His people out of Egypt. Helping His people escape slavery from Egypt was a miracle. Nothing ever happened in human history the same as this miracle before. God helped His people escape slavery in Egypt. Escaping Egypt was the beginning of Israel's journey with God, from Egypt to the Promised Land.

Moses is an important part of the book of Exodus. But this book is not really about Moses. The book of Exodus is about the God of love and truth. God loves freedom, forgiveness, and being fair. This same God went to the cross and died for us. When we study the book of Exodus, we get a special look at who our God really is.

And who is He really? He is a God who is loyal to His promises, even when His people fail Him. God always is for His people, even when they are against Him. Again and again, God showed His people, Israel, His mercy. He encouraged them, corrected them, and taught them. God wanted His people to worship and obey Him because they loved Him for who He was.

The God of Moses shows us a God who wants to communicate with us. God wanted to have a close family relationship with His special people. God led them to Sinai so that He could have this deep fellowship with them.

Paul teaches us that what happened to God's people in the past is a lesson for us: "Those things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us. That's because we are living at the time when God's work is being completed"

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(1 Corinthians 10:11, NIV). Israel's past history should be a warning to us. So, we should read, study, and learn from their past mistakes.

Below is our plan this quarter for studying the book of Exodus for the next 13 weeks:

1. Slavery in Egypt, the birth of Moses, and his first 40 years of life (Exodus 1–2).
2. God tells Moses to lead His people out of Egypt (Exodus 3–4).
3. Life gets worse before things get better (Exodus 5–6).
4. The 1st nine punishments (Exodus 7–10).
5. The 10th punishment and the celebration of the Passover feast (Exodus 11–12).
6. Israel escapes slavery in Egypt and crosses the Red Sea (Exodus 13–15).
7. The journey to Sinai (Exodus 16–18).
8. God's Promise and Ten Commandments (Exodus 19–20).
9. Other laws for everyday living (Exodus 21–23).
10. God makes His Promise with His people and gives Moses the building plans for the tabernacle or Holy Tent (Exodus 24–31).
11. Israel worships the gold cow, and Moses asks God to forgive them (Exodus 32).
12. God shows Moses who He really is, and Moses' face shines after the experience (Exodus 33–34).
13. The tabernacle or Holy Tent is built and given to God (Exodus 35–40).

The Exodus from Egypt and then Israel's crossing the Red Sea were wonderful miracles and acts.

Each week, we will study important verses and happenings from the chapters above.

May our loving Lord bless us as we study this important book. The book of Exodus helps us remember how much God wants to lead His people from slavery to freedom, from death to life, and from the desert to the New Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22).

Jiří Moskala is professor of Old Testament studies and the head of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

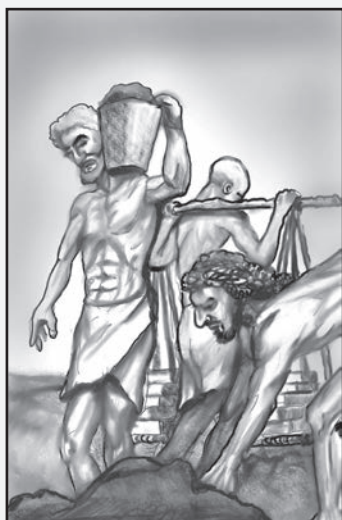
Moses: The Early Years



SABBATH—JUNE 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 1:1–7; Genesis 37:26–28; Exodus 1:9–21; Exodus 2:1–10; Exodus 2:11–25.

MEMORY VERSE: “The people of Israel were sad in their spirit because of being servants. They cried for help. And because of their hard work their cry went up to God. God heard their crying and remembered His agreement with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God saw the people of Israel and He cared about them” (Exodus 2:23–25, NLV).



The book of Exodus is filled with stories about people who were forced to do hard work.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS is filled with stories about people who were forced to do hard work. These people, the Hebrews, were powerless. The Egyptians didn't think the Hebrews were very important. So, the Egyptians hurt the Hebrews and were mean to them. The Egyptians used the Hebrews to do work that wasn't fair. The Egyptians made the Hebrews their slaves. Today, there are people everywhere who don't have anyone to support, protect, or help them. These people feel that no one remembers them or cares. They are forced to live as slaves. These same people today can feel hope when they read the book of Exodus, because the same God who saved the Hebrew people can save them, too.

The book of Exodus talks about the hard times that are part of life. Everyone can feel hope when they read about how God saves His suffering people. God hears our cries, sees our tears, and comes to help. God helps the people who trust in Him. With faith, we must accept God's offer of help. The book of Exodus shows us what Jesus will do for us all. He will lead us to the “Promised Land.”

GOD'S PEOPLE IN EGYPT (Exodus 1:1–7)

The book of Exodus is named the “shemot” in the Hebrew language. “Shemot” means “names” in English. The book of Exodus starts with these words: “When Jacob (Israel) went to Egypt, his sons and their families went with him. Here are the names of those sons” (Exodus 1:1, ERV). Next, we read the names of Jacob’s family.

Read Exodus 1:1–7. What important Bible truth do these verses teach us?

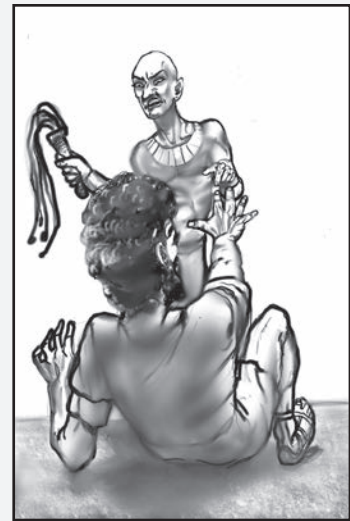
The book of Exodus starts with information that helps us remember God’s promise to bless Jacob. When Jacob and his family moved to Egypt, they were only 70 people (Genesis 46:27; Exodus 1:5). “But the Israelites had many children, and their number grew until the country of Egypt was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7, ERV). At the time that the Israelites left Egypt, “there were about 600,000 men old enough to go into battle. The women and children went with them” (Exodus 12:37, NIV).

Read Exodus 1:8–11. How was life in Egypt for the Israelites before Moses led them out of the country?

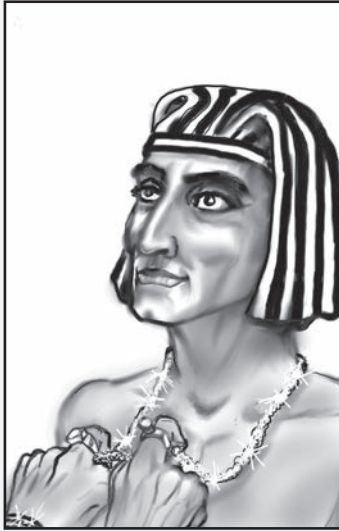
The book of Exodus tells us Israel’s time in Egypt was hard and unhappy. The story starts with the Egyptians making the Israelites their slaves. The Egyptians forced the Israelites to work hard. The Egyptians were mean to the Israelites. The book of Exodus ends with God in the Holy Tent at the center of the Israelite camp (read Exodus 40). The rest of the book of Exodus shows how God fights for His people and wins. God saves His people from slavery in Egypt. He opens the Red Sea. He beats the strongest army at that time. We see God win the fight against evil.

The story tells us that the more the Egyptians forced the Israelites to work hard, “the more they grew” in number (Exodus 1:12, ERV). What lesson does this part of the story teach us? It teaches us that God is in control. He will save His people, even when we feel we have no hope.

A new king controlled Egypt. This king didn’t respect Joseph or what he did for Egypt in the past. How does this story help us understand that good times can end fast and that life may not always be easy?



The story starts with the Egyptians making the Israelites their slaves.

HEBREW HISTORY: FROM JOSEPH TO MOSES
(Genesis 37:26–28)

Pharaoh also gave Joseph a nice linen robe [clothes] and put a gold chain around his neck.

Jacob's family left Canaan after a terrible famine or food shortage (Genesis 46). When the family arrived in Egypt, the Egyptian king was friendly and nice to the Hebrews because of Joseph and everything he did for the Egyptians.

"Pharaoh [the king of Egypt] said to Joseph, 'I now make you governor over all of Egypt.' Then Pharaoh gave his special ring to Joseph. The royal seal [the king's special stamp] was on this ring. Pharaoh also gave Joseph a nice linen robe [clothes] and put a gold chain around his neck. Then he [Pharaoh] told Joseph to ride in his second chariot [war wagon]. Pharaoh's officials [Egyptian leaders] said, " 'Let him be the governor over the whole land of Egypt!' " (Genesis 41:41–43, ERV).

What was the secret to Joseph's success in Egypt after arriving as a slave? Read Genesis 37:26–28 and Genesis 39:2, 21 for the answer.

The new king didn't respect or honor Joseph or how he helped Egypt in the past (Exodus 1:8). This new king was Ahmose (1580 B.C.–1546 B.C.) Next, Amenhotep the First became king (1553 B.C.–1532 B.C.). Amenhotep the First was afraid of the Israelites. So, he forced them to work hard and to do jobs that weren't fair. Later, Thutmose the First (1532 B.C.–1514 B.C.) ordered all the Hebrew male children to be killed. Thutmose's daughter was Hatshepsut (1504 B.C.–1482 B.C.). Hatshepsut was the princess who adopted Moses to be her son. Thutmose the Third (1504 B.C.–1450 B.C.) for some time was coleader with Hatshepsut. Thutmose the Third was the pharaoh during the Exodus or the time when Israel escaped from Egypt.

We believe the Exodus happened in March 1450 B.C. (Read the following verses to learn more about the Exodus: Genesis 15:13–16; Exodus 12:40, 41; Judges 11:26; and 1 King 6:1. Also read Acts 7:6 and Galatians 3:16, 17.)

Exodus 1 covers a long period in Israel's history: from Joseph's time to Pharaoh's order to kill the Hebrew baby boys. While some people disagree about the exact number of years that things happened, what matters most is that God remembered His people. Even when bad things happen, God is always there. We can trust Him to help us, too.

THE HEBREW NURSES (Exodus 1:9–21)

In Exodus 1, we learn that the Jews moved to Egypt. After a time of amazing success and peace, the Israelites became slaves. For sure, many Hebrews felt hopeless because of their suffering. But God didn't leave His people alone without any help. For sure, God's people, at times, felt that He abandoned them. But when they suffered, God came to help with His mighty strength. Our Lord encourages His followers in all ages and times with these words: " 'Call to me in times of trouble. I will save you, and you will honor me' " (Psalm 50:15, ICB).

What important work did the loyal midwives do? A midwife is a special nurse who helps women during childbirth. Why did God include their stories in the Bible? Read Exodus 1:9–21 for the answers.

Do you notice that the book of Exodus doesn't tell us the names of any of the Egyptian kings? The Bible names them only pharaoh, which means "king." The Egyptians believed that pharaoh was a god on earth and the son of the sun god, Ra (or the god Osiris or Horus). The Egyptians believed that Ra was the most powerful Egyptian god, because he was the sun god.

But this "god" wasn't powerful enough to force the midwives to kill the Hebrew baby boys. The Bible tells us the names of the two midwives: Shiphrah and Puah (Exodus 1:15). These women honored and respected the Lord. Pharaoh's evil command didn't scare them into obedience because they respected God more than the orders of a human king (also read Acts 5:29). So, God blessed Shiphrah and Puah with large families of their own. This story is a powerful story about being loyal to God. These women may not have been Bible experts. But they knew what was right. More than that, they chose to do the right thing.

When Pharaoh saw that his evil plan failed, he commanded the Egyptians to kill all the male Hebrew babies. Pharaoh ordered the Egyptians to throw the babies in the Nile River as an offering to Hapi, the god of the river. Pharaoh gave this order to defeat the Israelites in two ways: (1) he wanted to kill all the male Hebrew babies. And (2) he wanted the Hebrew women to become part of the Egyptian people and have only Egyptian babies. Then the Hebrews would no longer be a danger to the Egyptians.



Pharaoh ordered the Egyptians to throw the babies in the Nile River as an offering to Hapi, the god of the river.

MOSES IS BORN (Exodus 2:1–10)

Read Exodus 2:1–10. What did God do to protect Moses when he was born?



The princess Hatshepsut saved Moses' life when she drew or pulled him out of the river.

Moses' story is so exciting because he lived during the time that the famous 18th royal family controlled Egypt. One king during this time was Thutmose the Third. Thutmose is one of the most famous pharaohs or kings in ancient Egypt.

Moses was born at a time when the king wanted all Hebrew baby boys to die (read Exodus 1:22). At the same time, Moses was a "beautiful" baby (Exodus 2:2, ERV). The word written as "beautiful" in this verse comes from the Hebrew word "tob." "Tob" is more than outer beauty. This word is used to describe everything God made in the book of Genesis. God announced that everything He made was "good" or "very good" (Genesis 1:4, 10, 31).

Moses is the "good" child who will lead the Hebrews out of slavery. When Moses was born, who could guess his future? God has a special plan for this baby's life. God will use this "tob" (good) baby to keep His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God promised them hundreds of years before that He would give their future children the Promised Land (Exodus 2:24, 25).

Until that time, the Egyptian princess Hatshepsut adopted Moses as her son. Part of Moses' name means "son of" or "born from." We see this same meaning in the names of Ah-mose ("son of Akh") or Thut-mose ("son of Thoth"). In the Hebrew language, Moses' name is Mosheh, which means "to draw or pull out." The princess Hatshepsut saved Moses' life when she drew or pulled him out of the river.

We know only a few things about Moses' early life. After Hatshepsut saved and adopted Moses, he lived for 12 years with his real family (Exodus 2:7–9; also read Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 244). Then Moses got the best Egyptian education to get him ready to be the next king of Egypt (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 245). But the most important education Moses got was not from Egypt. His best education was about God's truth.

How much are you learning that is, in the end, useless for what really matters?

A CHANGE OF PLANS (Exodus 2:11–25)

What happened to Moses that changed his whole future? What lessons can we learn from this story? Read Exodus 2:11–25 for the answers.

What will Moses do? Will he follow the pleasures of Egypt? Or will he join his people in their suffering? Soon something happened that forced him to decide: he killed an Egyptian man.

“When Pharaoh heard about what had happened, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses escaped from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian. There he sat down by a well” (Exodus 2:15, NIV). After Moses killed the Egyptian, he had very little choice about what to do. He couldn’t stay in Egypt any longer. Hatshepsut’s plans for Moses to sit on the throne of Egypt and become a “god” came to an end. Moses would serve the true God. For sure, when Moses ran away, he had no idea what the future held for him.

“Soon the Egyptians heard about what Moses did. They told the story to the king and exaggerated what really happened. The Egyptians said that Moses wanted to lead his people against the Egyptians, destroy the government, and then sit on the king’s throne. The Egyptians said that as long as Moses lived, the kingdom wouldn’t be safe. Right away, the king decided that Moses must die. Moses learned about the danger and ran toward Arabia.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 247, adapted.

Moses lived 120 years (Deuteronomy 34:7). His life can be divided into three parts. Each part lasts for 40 years. The first 40 years Moses lived in Egypt. Much of those 40 years, Moses lived in the royal palace. The second 40 years, Moses lived in Jethro’s house in the land of Midian.

The first five books of Moses (and this quarter’s Bible study guide) tell us more about the last 40 years of Moses’ life. These books tell us the story about the special work God gave Israel to do. God wanted Israel to show the people on this earth His love and teach them about His holy law (read Deuteronomy 4:6–8). The people didn’t know God. They worshiped false gods.

Was it God’s plan for Moses to kill the Egyptian? If not, what does this story teach us about how God can correct any experience and use it to honor His name? How does Romans 8:28 help us understand this important Bible truth?



After Moses killed the Egyptian, he had very little choice about what to do.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Moses,” pages 241–251, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. This chapter will give you an important understanding about the Bible verses we studied this week.

The Bible says that “the nurses trusted God, so they did not obey the king’s command. They let all the baby boys live” (Exodus 1:17, ERV). Ellen G. White talks about the midwives and their faith in God. A midwife is a special nurse who helps women during childbirth. “The king of Egypt ordered the midwives to destroy the Hebrew male children when they were born. Their jobs made it easy for the women to do what the king commanded. Satan was behind the king’s order. Satan knew that a savior would be born among the Israelites. So, Satan hoped to destroy God’s plan to save His people. Satan caused the king to destroy the Israelite baby boys. But the midwives respected God. They refused to obey the evil command. The Lord honored their decision. He blessed them both with families of their own.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 242, adapted.

The good news is that God used loyal people to defeat Satan’s evil plans. We live in the land of our enemy, Satan. Jesus named Satan the prince or the leader on this fallen planet (Ephesians 2:2; John 14:30). Satan stole this kingdom from Adam. But when Jesus came to this earth, He beat Satan in His life, and with His death on the cross (Matthew 4:1–11; John 19:30; Hebrews 2:14). Satan is alive and working. But he will be destroyed (John 12:31; John 16:11; Revelation 20:9, 10, 14). In the meantime, God’s mercy can help us win the fight against all our troubles (Philippians 4:13). God’s mercy is our only hope.



But when Jesus came to this earth, He beat Satan in His life, and with His death on the cross (Matthew 4:1–11; John 19:30; Hebrews 2:14).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Why did God allow the Hebrews to live in Egypt as slaves? Why did God wait so long to save them? Israel suffered for a long time. But remember, the Israelites suffered only as long as they lived. How does this idea help us to understand better the topic of human suffering?
- ❷ Moses did not plan to kill the Egyptians. At the same time, how did Moses’ hotheaded behavior change what happened in the story? What if Moses chose not to kill him? Would that mean that the Hebrews wouldn’t escape Egypt? Explain your answer.

NO RATS FOR LUNCH

Peter enjoyed digging for rats in a mountain village in southern Zambia. The boy and his family ate the rats with porridge made from corn. Peter and his family also enjoyed eating pigs. Pork was always on their dinner table at Christmas. Peter and his family enjoyed bubble fish, too.

So, Peter was surprised when he learned that his favorite meat was forbidden in the Bible.

Peter heard about foods that were not clean for the first time when he traveled 20 miles from home to visit his brother. Peter's brother worked at a farm that some Seventh-day Adventist Bible workers owned. The Bible workers came from the United States. Peter stayed for Sabbath worship. The preacher talked about animals that were clean and not clean in Leviticus 11. Peter understood that he and his family were following a meal plan that didn't match the Bible's teaching.

After a while, the Bible workers started to hold meetings in Peter's elementary school on Sabbath afternoons. Peter went to these meetings. He walked two miles to arrive to the school.

Peter's parents weren't happy that their son went to the meetings. They tried to stop him from going. They told Peter that he was baptized when he was a baby. Father ordered Peter to work on the family farm on Saturdays. Peter didn't know anything about keeping the Sabbath. So, he did his farm chores as fast as he could in the morning. When he finished, he went to the meeting in the afternoon.

During Peter's high school years, he made new friends from Seventh-day Adventist families. Peter studied the Bible with them. Then he gave his heart to Jesus and was baptized in water. Peter stopped eating rats, pork, and bubble fish.

After a while, Peter's parents started to respect the seventh-day Sabbath. They understood why their son didn't eat meat that wasn't clean. Every Sabbath that Peter was at home, his parents encouraged him to be on time to Sabbath School.

Today, there's a Seventh-day Adventist church in Peter's town. Because of the Seventh-day Adventist message, many people in the town stopped eating meat that wasn't clean.

Peter is thankful that he learned about the health message when he was a boy. Peter learned to honor God with his food. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So if you eat, or if you drink, or if you do anything, do it for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31, ERV).

Peter says, "I thank Jesus for saving me. I thank Him for Bible truth about foods that aren't clean." Today, Peter Siamikobo is a church leader and a teacher at a Seventh-day Adventist high school in Zambia.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



The boy and his family ate the rats with porridge made from corn.

The Burning Bush



SABBATH—JULY 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 3:1–6; Exodus 3:7–12; Exodus 3:13–22; Exodus 4:1–17; Exodus 4:18–31.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then the Lord said, ‘I have seen the troubles my people have suffered in Egypt, and I have heard their cries when the Egyptians hurt them. I know about their pain. Now I will go down and save my people from the Egyptians. I will take [remove] them from that land and lead them to a good land where they can be free from these troubles. It [the Promised Land] is a land filled with many good things’” (Exodus 3:7, 8, ERV).



**God showed Moses
His plan for his life
at the burning bush.**

GOD'S PLAN for us will often change our whole lives. If we follow God's plan, we will learn that what He wants for us is always the best choice for our lives. But sometimes accepting God's plan isn't always easy for us to do.

Moses had a hard time at first. God showed Moses His plan for his life at the burning bush. Moses knew that he saw a miracle. The Lord had special work for Moses to do. The question was: Will Moses accept this work? For sure, this work will bring big changes to his life. At first, Moses wasn't really willing to accept the work.

You may remember times when you made big plans for your life. But God changed those plans. Yes, we can be useful to God in many ways. But when we completely follow God's plan and do what He leads us to do, we will be happy. God may ask us to do things that aren't always easy. For sure, things weren't always easy for Moses. But we must allow God to lead us, or we will go in the wrong direction.

THE BURNING BUSH (Exodus 3:1–6)

After Moses escaped to Midian, he married and had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Exodus 18:3, 4). Moses was part of Jethro's family. Jethro was Moses' father-in-law. Jethro was the priest or spiritual leader in Midian. Moses spent the next 40 years being a shepherd. He did the same work that David later did as a shepherd (2 Samuel 7:8). Moses enjoyed being outside in nature because it helped him think about God.

These quiet years in the desert helped change Moses and get him ready to be the leader of God's people. God also gave Moses special work to do. With the Holy Spirit's help, Moses wrote two of the oldest books in the Bible (read Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 251; and Francis D. Nicol, et al., editors, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 3, page 1,140). God gave Moses important information about the worldwide war between good and evil, the Fall, the Flood, and His plan to save sinners. Moses gave to us Bible truth about the living God, the God who made us and keeps us alive. Moses also helps us understand the things God is doing to solve the sin problem. Most important, Moses gave us the book of Genesis. Without this book, we can't really understand Bible history or God's plan to save us.

Read Exodus 3:1–6. In these verses, the Lord introduces Himself to Moses as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6, ERV). Why is this connection between Moses' ancestors and God important?

Moses saw that the fire burned the bush but didn't destroy it. Moses knew he saw a miracle. Something important must be happening right in front of him. As Moses moved closer, the Lord told him to take off his shoes to show respect for God. The place was holy because God was there.

The Lord told Moses that He was “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6, ERV). The Lord promised that He would give the land of Canaan to their future children. Of course, Moses knew about this promise. This promise helped Moses to understand that God had a plan to save His people and Moses was a part of it.

Moses needed 80 years before God decided that he was ready to lead His people. What does this truth teach us about our need to be patient?



Moses spent the next 40 years being a shepherd.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD (Exodus 3:7–12)

The Bible says, “On that mountain, Moses saw the angel of the LORD in a burning bush” (Exodus 3:2, ERV).

The Bible says, “On that mountain, Moses saw the angel of the LORD in a burning bush” (Exodus 3:2, ERV). Who was this “angel”? The Lord Jesus Himself! Jesus “spoke to him [Moses] from inside the bush” (Exodus 3:4, NIV).

Don’t let the name “angel of the LORD” confuse you. The word “angel” means “messenger” (from the Hebrew word “mal’akh”). Sometimes an angel in the Bible may be human. Or sometimes the angel may be from heaven (read Malachi 3:1). The Bible verse helps us to understand the correct meaning to choose for angel. Many verses in the Bible use the words “the angel of the LORD” to mean God Himself. (Read Genesis 22:11, 15–18; Genesis 31:3, 11, 13; Judges 2:1, 2; Judges 6:11–22; Zechariah 3:1, 2.) Jesus is God’s messenger. Jesus communicates the Father’s words to us.

Read Exodus 3:7–12. How did God explain to Moses why He wanted to help the Israelites, who were slaves in Egypt?

God’s people were suffering deeply. God heard them cry and wanted to help them (Exodus 2:23–25). God named Israel “my people” (Exodus 3:7, KJV). So, even before the Promise that God made to Israel at Sinai, the Israelites were His people. God will bless them and give them success in the Promised Land (if they will obey). God promised their fathers that He would do these things.

God told Moses to go to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to do a special job: “ ‘So now I am sending you to Pharaoh. Go! Lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt’ ” (Exodus 3:10, ERV). Again, as we see in this verse, God calls the Israelites “my people.”

For sure, God gave Moses a big job! Moses answered with a question: “ ‘Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the people of Israel out of Egypt?’ ” (Exodus 3:11, NIV). Moses understands what is about to happen. He understands what part he has in God’s plan. So, he wonders why God would choose him to do this important work. This question shows us early in the story who Moses is. He has no pride in his heart. He doesn’t feel that he is good enough to do what God asks him to do.

Why must our hearts be empty of all pride? How does a heart with no pride help us to do the work that God asks us to do, as His followers?

THE NAME OF THE LORD (Exodus 3:13–22)

Read Exodus 3:13–22. Why did Moses want to know God’s name? What does God’s name show us about Himself?

God tells Moses that He is “ ’ehējeh ’asher ’ehējeh,” which means “I will be who I will be,” or “I Am Who I Am.” In Exodus 3:12, God uses the same word “ ’ehējeh,” in verse 14, when he says to Moses, “I will be” with you. What do these words tell us about God? God is everlasting. He gives life to everything. This same God promises to “ ’live with those [people] who are sorry for their sins and have turned from them and are not proud’ ” (Isaiah 57:15, NLV).

From the beginning, God’s people knew Him as “Yahweh.” This name often is written as “the LORD” in the English language. The Israelites may not have known the deeper meaning of this name for God. Moses also knew the name Yahweh. But he, too, didn’t know the real meaning. So, that’s why when Moses asks the Lord, “What is Your name?” he is really asking the Lord to explain its deeper meaning.

In Exodus 6:3, the Bible gives us a helpful hint about the meaning of God’s name. In this verse, God says, “ ’I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by the name, God All-Powerful. But they did not know me by my name, the Lord’ ” (Exodus 6:3, ICB). God is not saying that Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the other fathers of God’s people didn’t know the name “Yahweh” (read Genesis 2:4, 9; Genesis 4:1, 26; Genesis 7:5; Genesis 15:6–8, and so on). God is saying that these men didn’t know the full meaning of His name.

God’s name, Yahweh, shows us that He is the personal God of His people. He is the God of the Promise. He is a loving, caring God who helps His people when they are in trouble. The name Yahweh also shows us that God is the Almighty God (Genesis 17:1). His miracles show His power to save. But Yahweh is a God who shows His power with His love and care for His people. Yahweh is the same God as Elohim (“mighty, strong, the God above everything.” Yahweh is the “God of all people.” He controls heaven and earth. He made everything.) At the same time, the name Yahweh shows us different parts of His relationship with humans.

What does it mean to know God’s name? God’s name is not a magic word. Our knowing His name is an announcement to other people that we believe He will save everyone who comes to Him in faith (Joel 2:32).



Yahweh made everything.

FOUR EXCUSES (Exodus 4:1–17)

Read Exodus 4:1–17. What set of signs did God give to Moses to show Pharaoh, the king of Egypt? How did these signs help convince everyone that God was with Moses?

Moses again tries to excuse himself from doing the job God asked him to do (read Exodus 3:10, 11). Moses didn't want to go to Egypt to challenge Pharaoh. Moses already failed when he tried to help the Hebrews on his own. His own people didn't believe in him or accept him as their leader. So, he came up with a third excuse: "What if the people of Israel do not believe me or listen to me? What if they say, 'The Lord did not appear to you'?" (Exodus 4:1, ICB). Moses isn't asking these questions to learn something new. Moses is trying to say "No" to the job God wants him to do.

God gives Moses two miracles to do in front of Israel's leaders, and then, later, Pharaoh. The first miracle is Moses' walking stick that turns into a snake and then back into a stick. The second miracle is that Moses' hand becomes white with leprosy. Leprosy is a terrible skin disease. Then Moses' hand is healed in an instant. Both miracles should convince the leaders that God is at work for them. But if they refuse to believe, God adds a third miracle: Moses will turn water into blood (Exodus 4:8, 9).

After God gives Moses these mighty signs, Moses makes a fourth excuse: he isn't a good talker.

Read the story in Exodus 4:10–18. How does the Lord answer Moses? What lessons can we learn from this story to help us in whatever work the Lord asks us to do?

Moses makes four excuses. These excuses show us that Moses didn't want to do what God asked. Moses uses four reasons to say no to God. These reasons are just excuses to get out of doing the work. The first three excuses are questions: (1) "Who am I?" (2) "Who are You?" (3) "What if they do not believe me?" The fourth excuse is the announcement: "I am not a good talker." God answered all Moses' excuses and gave a powerful promise to help him. But Moses didn't want to do it. Then Moses asks God to send someone else (Exodus 4:13). God tells Moses that He is already sending his brother Aaron to meet him and give him support. Finally, Moses has no more excuses and agrees to go. He asks Jethro for his blessing. Then Moses goes to Egypt.



The first miracle is Moses' walking stick that turns into a snake and then back into a stick.

THE SIGN OF GOD'S PROMISE (Exodus 4:18–31)

Read the story in Exodus 4:18–31. How do we understand this strange story? What can we learn from this lesson?

Bible students are surprised when they read this verse: “On the way to Egypt, Moses stopped at a place to spend the night. The LORD met Moses at that place and tried to kill him” (Exodus 4:24, ERV). What is going on here? Didn't God just ask Moses to work for Him? Why is God now trying to kill Moses? The story helps us to understand that the problem is about circumcision. Circumcision is the act of cutting the skin off the tip of the male sex parts. This act showed that the Israelite men accepted God's Promise. The problem was that Moses didn't circumcise or cut the skin off the tip of the sex parts of his youngest son after he was born to show that he belonged to God (Genesis 17:10, 11).

Moses was the leader of God's people. So, he needed to obey God in everything. Then he could teach other people to obey God, too. Moses' wife, Zipporah, moved quickly to save her husband's life. She circumcised her son or cut the tip off his sex parts. Zipporah touched Moses with the blood-covered skin. This blood is a symbol for Jesus' blood, His life, and His Promise.

We can learn an important lesson from this story: always do what is right.

“On the way from Midian, Moses got a terrible warning that showed him that the Lord wasn't happy with him. An angel appeared to Moses and frightened him. Moses thought the angel wanted to destroy him. God didn't explain to Moses what was happening. But Moses remembered that He didn't do something God asked. . . . Moses didn't circumcise his youngest son. Circumcision was necessary, or Moses' son couldn't get the blessings from God's Promise with Israel. If Moses didn't circumcise his son, then the people wouldn't respect God's law. Zipporah was afraid that the angel would kill her husband. So, she cut off the skin from her son's sex parts. Moses would be in terrible danger when he went to visit Pharaoh. God's angels saved Moses from death. But if Moses refused to do something God asked, then he wouldn't be safe. God's angels couldn't protect him from danger.” —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 255, 256, adapted.



An angel appeared to Moses and frightened him.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Moses,” pages 251–256, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

For sure, the burning bush story changed Moses’ life. All the other experiences in his life depended on his obedient answer to God’s call for Moses to serve Him. Moses must obey God in everything. God chose Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt and to the Promised Land.

Sure, we know how the story ends. But imagine in your mind that you are Moses at the burning bush. Moses ran away from Egypt to save his life. Then 40 years later, many Hebrew people were alive who didn’t know much about Moses or who he was. Or maybe what they heard was wrong. But now God wanted him to lead this same people away from a powerful king. No wonder Moses didn’t want to do the job!

Yes, the job was very hard. Again, think what Moses would have missed if he told God a final “No.” Then Moses might have disappeared into history instead of helping Israel escape slavery in Egypt. Moses became one of the most powerful and important people in the Bible and on the earth that anyone has ever known.



Moses wrote two Bible books with the Holy Spirit’s help.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ In the quiet years in the desert, Moses did what God asked him to do: he was a good family man. He took care of sheep. He wrote two Bible books with the Holy Spirit’s help. Then God asked Moses to be the leader of His people. What does Moses’ experience teach us about our duty in life?
- ❷ We may say that we understand why Moses made many excuses. “Why should people believe me?” “Who am I? I’m not an important person.” “I’m not a good speaker.” What will change in your life if you trust God to help you do the things He asks us to do?
- ❸ Moses wrote the book of Genesis. The book of Genesis helps us to understand Bible history and God’s plan to save sinners. Why must we reject any idea that says that the book of Genesis (mostly its first 11 chapters) is make believe?

HEALING THE MIND

Mitch was a member of a gang. Mitch got into a fight with some American Indians in the state of Washington, in the United States of America. Mitch injured his head very badly in the fight. The doctors said Mitch never would work again.

Then Mitch's younger brother, Stephan, invited him to the All Nations Center Adventist Church in Wapato, Washington. Stephan worshiped God every Sabbath at the church with their mother and sister.

At first, Mitch didn't really want to go. But he went anyway. Then he went again and again. Mitch started to read the Bible. The Bible gave Mitch hope that God could heal his mind. Mitch read Romans 12:2, which says: "Do not become like [the same as] the people who belong to this world. But let God completely change the way that you think, so that you live differently. Then you will understand what God wants you to do. You will know what is good. You will know what pleases God. You will know what is completely right" (EASY). Mitch also loved reading Philippians 4:8, which says, "Now my friends, I want to say this [advice] to you. Fill your minds with thoughts about good things. Think about things that are true, clean, right and lovely. Always think about things which people know are very good" (Philippians 4:8, EASY).

Church leader Jeff Weijohn encouraged Mitch. Jeff said, "The Bible promises to heal your mind if you study it."

In his own life, Mitch started to see God keep His Bible promises. The doctors were amazed. They told Mitch he never would work again. But they were surprised to see Mitch get a job and keep it.

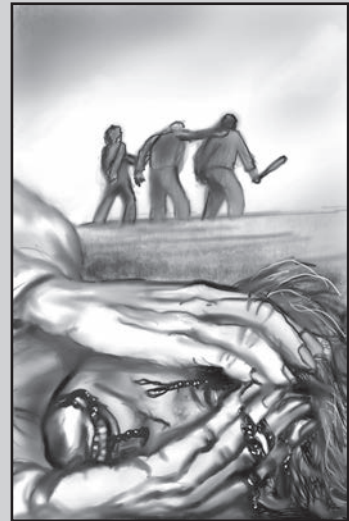
After Bible studies, Mitch gave his heart to Jesus. Then Mitch joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Soon after that, Mitch became a Bible worker. He started to teach the Bible to other people. Mitch and his wife invited homeless young people to live in their home. Anyone was welcome. But they must follow Mitch's rules. One rule was that everyone went to church on Sabbath.

The lives of the houseguests started to change.

One person told Jeff on Sabbath, "You know what? When you told us to study the Bible, we didn't want to listen to you. But now we want to study the Bible."

Jeff said that Mitch's life completely changed. Jeff added, "When Mitch accepted God into his life, people were amazed. Mitch used to be a stubborn person. His brain was injured in a fight. Now Mitch shares Bible truth with other people. Mitch touched the lives of so many young people. God works in us even when we are not perfect and made mistakes in the past."

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Mitch injured his head very badly in the fight.



**All Nations Center
Adventist Church**

A Hard Start



SABBATH—JULY 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 5:1, 2; Exodus 5:3–23; Exodus 5:22–6:8; Exodus 6:9–13; Exodus 6:28–7:7.

MEMORY VERSE: “After Moses and Aaron talked to the people, they went to the king of Egypt. They said, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: “Let my people go so they may hold a feast for me in the desert.”’ But the king of Egypt said, ‘Who is the Lord? Why should I obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord. And I will not let Israel go’ ” (Exodus 5:1, 2, ICB).



When God commanded Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, God told Moses exactly what He wanted him to do.

MANY CHRISTIANS think that when they decide to follow God, life will be easy and happy. They will always enjoy riches and success. The Bible shows us that things don't always happen this way. Sometimes our problems get worse. When that happens, we often feel hopeless. We start to ask hard questions about life and God that don't always have easy answers or any answers at all.

For sure, when we trust in God, we will have hard times. But if we continue to trust in God, He will solve our problems in His way and in His time. Often, we expect God to fix things fast and solve our problems right away. But we must learn to wait and trust Him.

Moses knew about trusting in God during hard times. When God commanded Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, God told Moses exactly what He wanted him to do. So things should be easy for Moses, right?

But as we shall see, things aren't always that easy.

WHO IS THE LORD? (Exodus 5:1, 2)

Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh, king of Egypt, “ ‘The LORD, the God of Israel, says, ‘Let my people go’ ” (Exodus 5:1, ERV; also read verse 2). How did Pharaoh answer? What does his answer say about him?

Pharaoh answers, “ ‘Who is the LORD?’ ” (Exodus 5:2, ERV). Pharaoh isn’t asking this question because he wants to learn about the Lord. Pharaoh’s question shows what is really in his heart: he rejects God as His Lord and Savior.

When Pharaoh says, “ ‘I do not know the Lord’ ” (Exodus 5:2, ICB), he is bragging. He is full of pride.

How many people in history said the same thing that Pharaoh did? The answer should make us feel sad because when people reject God, they reject everlasting life. As Jesus said, “ ‘And this is eternal [everlasting] life: that people can know you, the only true God, and that they can know Jesus Christ, the one you sent’ ” (John 17:3, ERV).

Egypt is a symbol for any group of people who rejects God’s control and His saving power. These people stand against God, the Bible, and His people.

Next, Pharaoh says, “ ‘I will not let Israel go’ ” (Exodus 5:2, ICB). These words show more of his war against the living God. So, we can see that Egypt is a symbol for anyone who rejects God and also fights against Him.

Many Christians saw this same spirit in the French Revolution (also read Isaiah 30:1–3 and Revelation 11:8). A revolution is a complete change in government. Pharaoh thought he was a god or the son of a god. When someone believes he is a god, he believes that his own power, strength, and wisdom are above everyone else’s.

“More than any other country in Bible history, Egypt rejected the living God and refused to obey His commands. The king of Egypt fought against God’s control more than any other king or leader. When Moses announced the Lord’s message to the king, Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord? Why should I obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord. And I will not let Israel go.’ Exodus 5:2 [ICB]. This answer shows that Pharaoh didn’t believe in God. Later in history, another country would say the same thing as Pharaoh. This country [France] also would refuse to accept God’s control or believe in Him. The people of this country would fight against Him.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 269, adapted.



The king of Egypt fought against God’s control more than any other king or leader.

TWO REASONS TO HONOR THE SABBATH (Exodus 5:3–23)

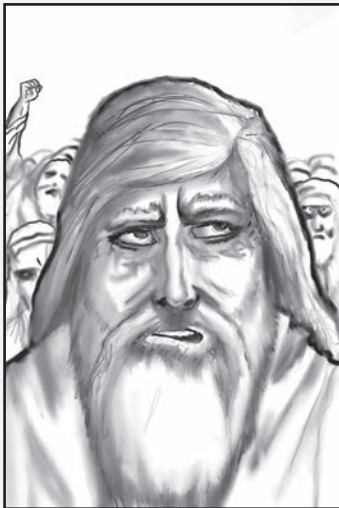
Moses must have known that the work God gave him to do wasn't going to be easy. But Moses did not know what would happen next.

What happened after Moses and Aaron's first meeting with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt? Read Exodus 5:3–23 for the answer.

Before Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, they met with the leaders and the people of Israel. Moses and Aaron told them God's message and showed them God's signs. Israel believed that the Lord would help them escape from slavery. So, the people worshiped the Lord (Exodus 4:29–31).

Next, Moses went to the king of Egypt with God's message. Then things got worse for the Israelites. The Israelites suffered more each day. Their daily work got harder. The Egyptians blamed the Israelites for being lazy. The Egyptians were mean and nasty to the Israelites.

The Israelite leaders weren't happy. They met with Moses and Aaron. The meeting between them was ugly. This meeting showed the type of problems that Moses would have with his own people for years to come.



The Israelites didn't expect Moses to make their lives under the Egyptians harder at first.

Read Exodus 5:21, and imagine in your mind that you are these men who challenge Moses and Aaron. Why do you think these men said what they did to Moses and Aaron?

We can easily see why these men were upset with Moses. (The men say, " 'May the LORD judge and punish you for what you did!' " [Exodus 5:21, ERV].) The Israelites expected Moses to help them escape from the Egyptians. The Israelites didn't expect Moses to make their lives under the Egyptians harder first.

So, Moses and Aaron not only had problems with Pharaoh. Moses and Aaron had problems with their people, too.

Sooner or later, disagreements will happen in the church. What are some things that you and other church members can do to make peace when disagreements with local church leaders happen?

I AM THE LORD (Exodus 5:22–6:8)

For sure, we easily can feel sorry for Moses. First, Pharaoh scolds him. Now his own people are angry with him.

So, Moses brings his complaint to God. “Then Moses prayed to the LORD and said, ‘Lord, why have you done this terrible thing to your people? Why did you send me here? I went to Pharaoh and said what you told me to say. But since that time he has made the people suffer, and you have done nothing to help them!’ ” (Exodus 5:22, 23, ERV). We can understand why Moses is unhappy with the Lord.

God’s answer is powerful. God will act in a strong and powerful way, too. “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh’ ” (Exodus 6:1, ERV).

What does God say to Moses? Read Exodus 5:22–6:8 for the answer. What important Bible truths do we learn from God’s answer?

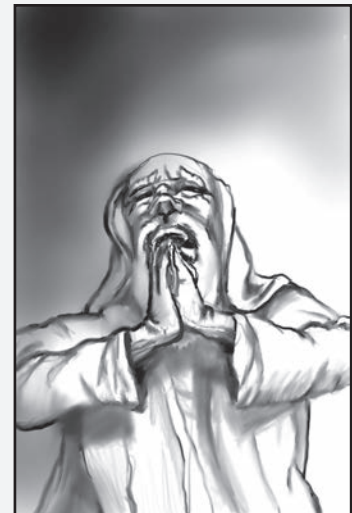
God will now act to save His people. God helps Moses remember a few important Bible truths: (1) I am the LORD. (2) I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (3) I made my Promise with them. (4) I promised to give them the land of Canaan. (5) I heard the complaints and suffering of the Israelites. And (6) I remembered my promise to give you the Promised Land.

Do you see that God says the word “I” again and again? I am the Lord your God. I did this and that. So you can trust that I will do for you what I promised.

The Lord now announces that He will do four big things for Israel because He is their living Lord: (1) “ ‘You will no longer be slaves of the Egyptians’ ” (Exodus 6:6, ERV). (2) “ ‘I will use my great power to make you free’ ” (Exodus 6:6, ERV). (3) “ ‘And I will bring terrible punishment to the Egyptians’ ” (Exodus 6:6, ERV). (4) “ ‘You will be my people and I will be your God. I am the LORD your God’ ” (Exodus 6:7, ERV).

These four actions show God’s relationship with His people. God offers to do these four things for free for His people because He loves them. He offered these gifts to His people back then. He offers us the same gifts today.

What other people in the Bible cried out in complaint to God? Why is it OK to tell God what’s in your heart? Why must you always talk to God with faith and trust?



**Moses brings
his complaint to God.**

A VERY BAD TALKER (Exodus 6:9–13)

The Lord gave Moses powerful promises about what He will do next. For sure, these promises gave Moses hope.

What happened next in the story? Read Exodus 6:9–13 for the answer. What lessons does this story teach us? How can these lessons help us during hard times and disappointment in our lives?

The Hebrews are so sad because of their suffering and hard work. So, they don't listen to Moses or his encouraging words. Moses tells the Hebrews that God will do what He promised. The Hebrew people have waited so long for God's help. But they continue to be slaves. Why should things be different now? The Hebrews are losing hope.

We all have felt this way in the past, right? Each one of us, at times, has felt sad, disappointed, and unhappy. We may have felt that God left us all alone.

Remember the story about Job? What about Asaph? Asaph was a Bible poet. Asaph wondered why evil people enjoyed success while good people suffered. Yes, Asaph asked hard questions. At the same time, these questions helped him to write one of the most beautiful poems about faith:

“But I am always with you.
You have held my hand.
You guide me with your advice.
And later you will receive [accept] me in honor.
I have no one in heaven but you.
I want nothing on earth besides you.
My mind and my body may become weak.
But God is my strength.
He is mine forever” (Psalm 73:23–26, ICB).

All through the Bible, God promises His people that He is with them (Isaiah 41:13; Matthew 28:20). God gives His people His peace and His comfort. God makes them strong so that they may solve life's problems better (John 14:27; John 16:33; Philippians 4:6, 7).

God's Promise with His people says: “ ‘You will be my people and I will be your God. I am the LORD your God, and you will know that I made you free from Egypt’ ” (Exodus 6:7, ERV). This verse shows us that God wanted a close relationship with His people, Israel.



All through the Bible, God promises His people that He is with them (Isaiah 41:13; Matthew 28:20).

**THE SAME AS GOD TO PHARAOH, KING OF EGYPT
(Exodus 6:28–7:7)**

How does the Lord answer Moses? Read Exodus 6:28–7:7 for the answer.

God appears to Moses as Yahweh. The name Yahweh shows that He is a God who wants a close, personal relationship with His people. As part of this relationship, God made promises to His people.

This same God again commands Moses to go and talk with Pharaoh. Moses again tells God why he can't do what God asks: " 'I don't speak very well. So why would Pharaoh listen to me?' " (Exodus 6:30, NIV). Again, we see that Moses has no pride in his heart. At the same time, we also see that Moses doesn't want to do what God asks Him to do. So far, things haven't gone very well for Moses.

"When God ordered Moses to go back to Pharaoh, Moses showed that he didn't trust in himself. The words 'don't speak very well' come from words in the Hebrew language that are much the same as Moses' words in Exodus 4:10: " 'I speak slowly' (ERV)." —*Andrews Bible Commentary: Old Testament*, "Exodus" (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2020), page 205, adapted.

God in His mercy sends Aaron to help Moses. Moses will tell Aaron God's messages. Then Aaron will speak in public to Pharaoh. So, Moses will be the same as God in front of the Egyptian king. Aaron will be Moses' special messenger.

This story gives us an excellent understanding of the work that a special messenger or prophet does. A prophet speaks for God. A prophet communicates God's word to His people and explains His messages. Moses talked to Aaron, and then Aaron announced Moses' words to Pharaoh. In the same way, God communicates with the Bible prophets. Then the prophets announce God's teaching to the people. Sometimes the prophets hear God's message and then announce it. More often, the prophets wrote down God's message first and then shared it with the people.

God also explains to Moses what he can expect from his meeting with Pharaoh. God warns Moses that the meeting will be long and difficult. For the second time, God tells Moses that God will cause Pharaoh to be stubborn (Exodus 4:21; Exodus 7:3). Everything will turn out well because the Egyptians will learn that the Lord is God (Exodus 7:5). So, in the end, the Egyptians will honor and respect God.



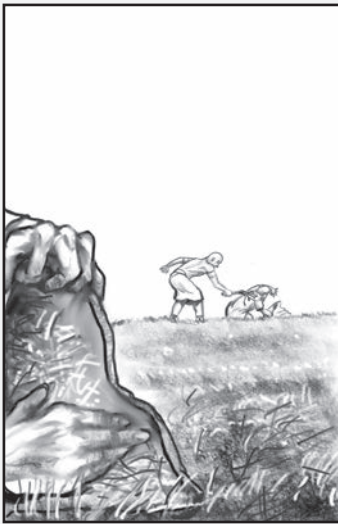
Moses talked to Aaron, and then Aaron announced Moses' words to Pharaoh.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Plagues of Egypt,” pages 257–265, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

Look at how badly things started off for Moses and the Israelites after Moses went to Pharaoh, king of Egypt:

“The king was very upset. He believed that the Israelites were trying to get out of serving him. He thought the Israelites were lazy. Pharaoh believed the Israelites made plans against him because they weren’t working hard enough. Pharaoh would make sure that the people had no time left to make plans against him. Right away, Pharaoh gave orders to make their slavery worse and to destroy their spirit of independence. In Egypt, the buildings were made of sun-dried bricks. The finest buildings were made of these bricks and then covered with stone. Many slaves were needed to make all these bricks. The bricks were made with cut straw. The straw held the bricks together. So, the slaves needed a lot of straw to make the bricks. The king now ordered the Egyptians to stop giving straw to the Israelites. The Israelites must collect their own straw. At the same time, the Israelites must continue to make the same number of bricks as before.

“This order upset the Israelites everywhere. The Egyptian masters put Hebrew managers in charge of the work of making the bricks. These Hebrew managers were responsible for the work of the Hebrews under them. When the slaves learned about the king’s order, they went everywhere in the land to collect the straw. But they couldn’t find enough straw to get their work done. So, Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew managers to be beaten.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 258, adapted.



“The Israelites must collect their own straw. At the same time, the Israelites must continue to make the same number of bricks as before.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Think of a time when you did what God wanted and things didn’t go well or start off well. What hard lessons did you learn from that experience?
- ❷ Share how God helped you when you prayed for His help or gave you help when you didn’t expect it. How can we learn to trust in God to help us when bad things happen?
- ❸ How can you help someone who doesn’t know the Lord? How can you help him understand why knowing God is so important?

MONKEYS OR CHURCH?

Monkeys tried to destroy the crops of a family farm in the country of Mozambique, in Africa. Antônio Cuchata's father gave his son strict orders. Guard the farm to keep the monkeys away. But Antônio didn't want to guard the farm on Sabbath. Not long ago, Antônio gave his heart to the Lord. He was baptized. Now he wanted to spend Sabbath worshipping in a Seventh-day Adventist church.

What should Antônio do? Antônio prayed and went to church.

Vervet monkeys were a big problem for small farmers. The monkeys stole sweet potatoes, beans, peanuts, and other crops. Father was worried that the family wouldn't have food or income if the monkeys ruined their crops. Also, Father didn't like his son going to the Seventh-day Adventist church. Antônio grew up in another faith. So, Father didn't understand why the boy wanted to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath. Father often didn't go to church on Sunday so that he could watch the farm. Father told Antônio that he also should help on Saturdays.

Antônio didn't plan to become a Seventh-day Adventist. But a Seventh-day Adventist cousin studied the Bible with him. Antônio became convinced about Bible truth when he read: "Remember to keep the Sabbath as a holy day. You may work and get everything done during six days each week. But the seventh day is a day of rest to honor the Lord your God. On that day no one may do any work: not you, your son or daughter, or your men or women slaves. Neither your animals nor the foreigners living in your cities may work" (Exodus 20:8–10, ICB).

Antônio loved Father. But Antônio also loved the Lord and Bible truth. He didn't know what to do. So, he knelt and prayed. "Dear God, please stop the monkeys from coming to our farm while I am at church." Then Antônio went to the Seventh-day Adventist church in Casa-Nova. The church was 15 miles away.

Antônio wasn't sure what to expect when he got home. He was so happy to learn that the monkeys stayed away all day! Antônio prayed and went to church the next Sabbath. Again, the monkey didn't come near the farm. Every Sabbath while Antônio lived at home, the monkeys stayed away from the farm while he worshiped at church.

Sad to say, Father refused to believe that God worked a miracle. But Antônio was thankful to God. Today, years later, he continues to feel amazed at God's care.

Antônio says, "The monkeys also kept the Sabbath!"

Pray for our worldwide church's work in Mozambique and other countries in Africa and India. This quarter's 13th Sabbath Offering will support our church's work to share the Good News about Jesus in these areas.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



The monkeys stole sweet potatoes, beans, peanuts, and other crops.



God Punishes Egypt



SABBATH—JULY 19

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 7:8–15; Exodus 7:3, 13, 14, 22; Exodus 7:14–8:19; Exodus 8:20–9:12; Exodus 9:13–10:29.

MEMORY VERSE: “Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go free, just as the LORD had said through [told to] Moses” (Exodus 9:35, ERV).



Pharaoh doesn't want to let God's people go.

A FARMER tried to get his donkey to move. But the donkey wouldn't budge. So, the farmer took a thick branch and smacked the donkey. Again, the farmer spoke to the donkey. Then the donkey started to move.

When someone asked the farmer why the farmer's plan worked, he answered, “First you need to get the animal's attention.”

This story helps us understand better Moses' experience with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God gave Moses his orders. Then Moses went to Pharaoh with God's famous words, “shalach et ami,” which means “Let My people go!”

Pharaoh doesn't want to let God's people go. The Bible doesn't explain why Pharaoh refused. Yes, the Egyptians believed the Hebrews could join their enemies in a war, fight against them, and escape Egypt (read Exodus 1:10). At the same time, the Hebrews were the slaves of the Egyptians. As slaves, the Hebrews worked for free. Pharaoh didn't want to lose his slaves. So, God needed to get Pharaoh's attention first before He could get Pharaoh to change his mind about letting His people go free.

**THE LORD GOD AGAINST “THE GODS” OF EGYPT
(Exodus 7:8–15)**

What lessons can we learn from the first meeting between the God of the Hebrews and the gods of Egypt? Read Exodus 7:8–15 for the answer.

The coming fights were going to be between the living God and the Egyptian “gods.” What made things worse was that Pharaoh believed he was one of those gods. The Lord didn’t just fight against the Egyptians, or even Egypt itself. The Lord fought against their gods. The Egyptians honored more than 1,500 male and female gods. The Bible tells us very clearly: “I will punish all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord” (Exodus 12:12, ICB). Later, when Israel hears the story again about how God saved them, Moses tells them, “The Egyptians were burying all their oldest sons. The LORD had struck them down. He had done it when he punished their gods” (Numbers 33:4, NIV).

We can see an example of how God punished their gods in the story of the stick that turned into a snake (Exodus 7:9–12). In Egypt, a cobra was a symbol of Wadjet, a female snake god. A cobra is a snake whose bite can kill a person. Wadjet controlled southern or Lower Egypt. The symbol of the cobra was in Pharaoh’s crown. The cobra was a sign of Pharaoh’s power and showed he was a god. That’s because the Egyptians believed that Wadjet would spit poison at Pharaoh’s enemies. The Egyptians also believed that the snake was holy. So, the snake would lead Pharaoh to the place where Egyptian kings went after they died.

Aaron’s stick became a snake and ate all the other snakes in front of Pharaoh. In this way, God showed His power over Egyptian magic. God beat the symbol of Pharaoh’s might. Not only that, Aaron and Moses held the snake in their hands (Exodus 7:12, 15). This first fight showed God’s power and control over Egypt. Moses had more power and control than did the “god” Pharaoh himself.

The ancient Egyptians also believed that another snake god, Nehebkaui, was holy. So, the Egyptians worshiped him. Nehebkaui’s name means “he who controls the spirits.” The Egyptians believed Nehebkaui was very powerful because he swallowed seven cobras. So, when Aaron’s stick became a snake and swallowed all the other snakes, God showed the Egyptians that He, not their snake god, had all the power. After this powerful meeting, the Egyptians understood this message right away and very clearly.



Aaron's stick became a snake and ate all the other snakes in front of Pharaoh.

**WHO MADE PHARAOH'S HEART STUBBORN?
(Exodus 7:3, 13, 14, 22)**

Read Exodus 7:3, 13, 14, 22. How do we understand these verses?

Nine times in the book of Exodus, the Bible says that God makes Pharaoh's heart hard or stubborn (Exodus 4:21; Exodus 7:3; Exodus 9:12; Exodus 10:1, 20, 27; Exodus 11:10; Exodus 14:4, 8; also read Romans 9:17, 18). Another nine times we read in the Bible that Pharaoh made his own heart hard (Exodus 7:13, 14, 22; Exodus 8:15, 19, 32; Exodus 9:7, 34, 35).

So, who really made the king's heart hard: God or Pharaoh himself?

To answer this question, let's look at the story about God's ten punishments against Egypt. We read that in each of the first five punishments, Pharaoh caused his own heart to become hard. So, he started the problem. Then, starting with the 6th punishment, the Bible says that God made Pharaoh's heart hard (Exodus 9:12). What this information tells us is that God honored Pharaoh's decision and gave it more strength. That's exactly what God promised Moses He would do (Exodus 4:21).

In other words, God sent punishments to help Pharaoh stop sinning and to turn from the evil in his heart. God didn't put fresh evil in Pharaoh's heart. God allowed Pharaoh to do the evil that was in his heart already (read Romans 1:24–32).

So, God didn't remove Pharaoh's free choice. Pharaoh was free to decide to serve God or fight against Him. Pharaoh chose to fight against God.

The lessons from this story are plain. God gives us free choice. We can choose between right and wrong, good and evil, to obey or not to obey. Lucifer in heaven, Adam and Eve in Eden, Pharaoh in Egypt, and us today: God gives us all a choice. Wherever we live, we choose between life or death (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Here's a word picture to help us better understand this idea: imagine, in your mind, butter and clay in sunshine. The sun melts the butter but makes the clay hard. The heat of the sun is the same on both objects. But two different things happen. What happens depends on the material. With Pharaoh, his actions depended on his thoughts and feelings about God and His people.



The sun melts the butter, but makes the clay hard.

THE FIRST THREE PUNISHMENTS (Exodus 7:14–8:19)

God sends ten punishments to Egypt. For sure, these punishments made life terrible for the Egyptians. But the punishments were really against their gods. Each punishment hit at least one of these gods.

What were the punishments? Read Exodus 7:14–8:19 for the answer.

God told Moses that the talk with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, would be difficult (Exodus 7:14). But God wants to show Himself to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians. So, God decides to communicate with them in a way that they can understand. Also, the Hebrews will learn more about their God from His punishments against the Egyptians.

The first punishment is against Hapi. Hapi is the god of the Nile (Exodus 7:17–25). Life in Egypt depended on water from the Nile. Where there was water, there was life. Because water made life possible, the Egyptians invented Hapi and worshiped this god as the giver of life.

Of course, only the living God is the Giver of all life, including water and food (Genesis 1:1, 2, 20–22; Psalm 104:27, 28; Psalm 136:25; John 11:25; John 14:6). Changing water into blood is a symbol of changing life into death. Hapi couldn't give life or protect it. Only God can.

God gives Pharaoh another chance. This time, God fights against and punishes the female frog god, Heqet (Exodus 8:1–15). Then the Nile gives frogs, not life. The Egyptians fear and hate the frogs. The Egyptians want to get rid of them. The exact time when this punishment ends shows that God's power was the cause of the frogs.

The third punishment has the shortest explanation (Exodus 8:16–19). The type of insect meant here ("kin-nim" in the Hebrew language) is not clear. (Maybe they are gnats, mosquitoes, ticks, or lice.) The punishment was against the god Geb. Geb was the Egyptian god of the earth. Out of the dust, God brings insects. (The word "dust" helps us remember that God made the skies and the earth.) The insects cover the land. The Egyptian magicians can't do this miracle (that's because only God can make life). So, the magicians announce, " 'This is the finger of God' " (Exodus 8:19, NLV). That is, God's power was the cause of the insects. But Pharaoh refused to change his heart.



God gives Pharaoh another chance. This time, God fights against and punishes the female frog god, Heqet.

FLIES, LIVESTOCK, AND BOILS (Exodus 8:20–9:12)

Read Exodus 8:20–9:12. This story shows us that God is very powerful. At the same time, what does this story teach us about our freedom to reject God?

Uatchit was the Egyptian female god of flies. The god Khepri was in charge of the rising sun, life, and being born again on this earth after dying. The Lord defeated both of these “gods.” In the story in Exodus 8:20–9:12, God protected the Hebrews while the Egyptians suffered. From this time forward, none of God’s punishments bother the Hebrews anymore.

Again, God’s punishments were His way of letting Pharaoh, king of Egypt, know that “‘I, the LORD, am in this land’ ” (Exodus 8:22, ERV).

Pharaoh tried to bargain with God. Pharaoh was willing to allow Israel to worship their God and give offerings to Him. But the Israelites must not leave Egypt (Exodus 8:25). Moses couldn’t agree to this plan because the Egyptians thought animals were holy. If the Israelites killed these animals and gave them to God as an offering, the Egyptians would hurt the Hebrews. Also, God’s plan for His people didn’t include their staying in Egypt.

In the meantime, God’s next punishment (Exodus 9:1–7) falls on the livestock. Hathor was the Egyptian female god of love and protection. Hathor had the head of a cow. A bull god Apis also was very popular in Egypt. So, in the 5th punishment, God defeated important Egyptian gods when the livestock of the Egyptians died.

In the 6th punishment (Exodus 9:8–12), God completely defeats the female god Isis. Isis was the god of medicine, magic, and wisdom. God also defeated other Egyptian gods: Sekhmet and Imhotep. Sekhmet was the female god of war and disease. Imhotep was the god of medicine and healing. Sekhmet and Imhotep can’t protect the people who worship them. Now the magicians are so sick that they can’t appear in Pharaoh’s palace. The magicians are helpless to stop the God who made the skies and the earth.

For the first time in the story about the ten punishments, a verse says that “the LORD made Pharaoh stubborn” (Exodus 9:12, NIV). As we already saw, these words show us that the Lord will respect our decisions. He will allow us to suffer when we choose to reject Him.



So, in the 5th punishment, God defeated important Egyptian gods when the livestock of the Egyptians died.

**FROZEN RAIN, MORE INSECTS, AND NO LIGHT
(Exodus 9:13–10:29)**

Are God's punishments against the Egyptian gods a success? Do they cause Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to change his mind? Read Exodus 9:13–10:29 for the answers.

Nut was the Egyptian female god of the skies. The Egyptians often painted pictures of Nut that showed her in control of everything that happened under the sky and on the earth. Osiris was the god of crops and having babies. In the Bible, hail or frozen rain is often a punishment from God (Isaiah 28:2, 17; Ezekiel 13:11–13). During this punishment, the Egyptians who hide their property in a safe shelter will be protected (Exodus 9:20, 21). Everyone is now given a test: will they, or will they not, believe God's Word and obey the warning?

God says that His reason for letting Pharaoh live is so that the whole earth will know Him (Exodus 9:16). The king of Egypt now confesses that he sinned. But later, he changes his mind.

Seth was the Egyptian god of storms, war, disagreements, and disease. Seth and Isis were the gods of farming. Shu was a god of the air. Serapis was the female god of making babies, healing, and the afterlife. None of the Egyptian gods can stop God's punishments (Exodus 10:4–20) because statues have no power (Isaiah 44:9, 10, 12–17).

Pharaoh's servants ask him to let Israel go. But again Pharaoh refuses. Pharaoh tries to make a deal with Moses. But Moses rejects Pharaoh's offer because he won't let the Hebrew women and children join the men in the desert. Women and children are an important part of worship.

Finally, Ra was the top Egyptian god. As we saw already, Ra was the sun god. Thoth was a moon god. But Ra and Thoth can't give light. Pharaoh again tries to make a deal with Moses. But Moses refuses to accept this bargain. Then darkness falls on Egypt for three days. But there was light where the Israelites lived. The separation between the Israelites and the Hebrews is powerful.

Pharaoh refused to feel sorry about his sins. The Lord gave Pharaoh very powerful proof that He was God. Pharaoh's own servants asked him, " 'How long will this man [Moses] make trouble for us? Let the Israelite men go to worship the Lord their God. Don't you know that Egypt is ruined?' " (Exodus 10:7, ICB). But Pharaoh refused to obey God and let His people go.



**Then darkness falls
on Egypt for three days.
But there was light
where the Israelites lived.**

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Plagues of Egypt,” pages 265–272, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“God allowed His people to see that the Egyptians were very mean and nasty. Then His people wouldn’t want to worship their gods. The Lord showed how much He hated the worship of false gods. The Lord punished Pharaoh for hurting His people and for refusing to be kind and fair to them. . . . God didn’t work a special miracle to make the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, hard. God gave Pharaoh powerful proof of His strength. But the king was stubborn. He refused to obey God’s truth. Every time Pharaoh rejected God’s truth, he grew more stubborn. Then Pharaoh wanted to fight against God more. Pharaoh rejected the first miracle. That choice caused terrible things to happen to Pharaoh in the end.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 268, adapted.



“Every time Pharaoh rejected God’s truth, he grew more stubborn.”

“The Egyptians prayed to the sun and the moon. When God caused the sky over Egypt to become dark, the people and their gods alike suffered. God came to help the people that the Egyptians made their slaves. The punishment was scary. But the punishment also shows God’s forgiveness and love. God didn’t want to destroy the people of Egypt. God gave the Egyptians time to confess their sins before He sent them the final and most terrible punishment.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 272, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think more about why Pharaoh made his heart so hard against God. Pharaoh saw proof that letting God’s people go was the correct choice. But he refused to let them go. How can someone be so foolish? What does Pharaoh’s story teach us about lying to ourselves? What other people in the Bible made the same bad decisions? Think, for example, of Judas.
- ② When Pharaoh sees the disaster that his evil choices brought on Egypt, he confesses, “ ‘This time I have sinned. The LORD is right, and I and my people are wrong’ ” (Exodus 9:27, ERV). At the time, this announcement seems very powerful. But how do we know that Pharaoh didn’t really mean what he said?

JESUS SEES OUR TEARS

No Christians lived in Kokila's town. So, the townspeople got angry when Kokila's father and four other families decided to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. Kokila was 9. Her father's decision changed her life forever.

Kokila's mother died when Kokila was a baby. Kokila lived with her father, four older sisters, and an older brother in southern Asia.

Father was a farmer. He was very poor. The town leaders didn't let Father work in the field after he started to keep the Sabbath. The town leaders also refused to let father and the other Sabbath-keepers buy food from the stores.

Also, the town leaders made a rule. Anyone who spoke to the Sabbath-keepers must pay a lot of money as punishment. No one wanted to pay the money. So, Kokila's neighbors refused to talk to her and her family. Kokila had many friends. She lost them all.

The neighbors tried to force Kokila's family to give up their faith. The neighbors entered Kokila's home. They took the furniture, clothes, and dishes outside. They dumped everything on the street. Then the neighbors beat her father and brother. But Kokila's father refused to give up his faith.

One neighbor was kind during that terrible time. The neighbor wasn't a Christian. But he wasn't a member of the same big worldwide religion as all of the townspeople either. This neighbor helped Kokila's family to buy rice. He talked to Kokila. He was happy to pay the money for breaking the town rules.

For seven years, Kokila lived in danger. Three of the families who accepted the Sabbath left the church. Only two of the five families stayed loyal to God. One of those families was Kokila's family.

Kokila didn't complain. But she cried a lot. Father saw her tears. So, he decided to send Kokila to a Seventh-day Adventist school away from home. Kokila went to live there as a student. The school was the same as a heaven on earth for the girl.

Today, Kokila is 39. She works as a secretary at the school. The name of the school is E. D. Thomas Memorial Higher Secondary School, in Thanjavur, India.

Kokila remembers her happy time there as a student. She said, "The teachers talked to me! The children talked to me! It was so nice to have friends again."

Thank you for your 13th Sabbath offerings. Your offerings support Seventh-day Adventist schools worldwide. E. D. Thomas Memorial Higher Secondary School got part of a 13th Sabbath Offering in 2020.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



The neighbors dumped everything on the street.



Kokila

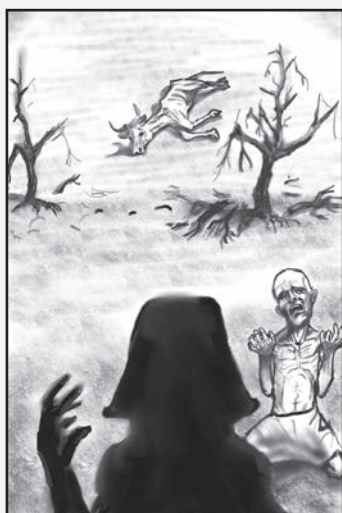
Passover



SABBATH—JULY 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 11:1–10; Exodus 12:1–20; Exodus 12:17–23; Exodus 12:24–28; Exodus 12:29, 30.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘When your children ask you, “Why are we doing these things?” you will say, “This is the Passover sacrifice [offering] to honor the Lord. When we were in Egypt, the Lord passed over the houses of Israel. The Lord killed the Egyptians, but he saved our homes.” ’ So now the people bowed down and worshiped the Lord” (Exodus 12:26, 27, ICB).



The king's decision hurt many people and destroyed his country.

THE 10TH PUNISHMENT is about to fall on Egypt. Moses gives Pharaoh, king of Egypt, his last warning. The king must make his final decision. Pharaoh and his leaders will soon make a decision that will cause the life or death of many people. Pharaoh's decision will change the lives of everyone in Egypt forever. Pharaoh's thoughts and feelings about the living God of Israel will decide his future and that of every Egyptian.

How do we feel, and what do we do, when we must make a choice that will change the lives of so many people?

God is more than willing to give us wisdom, understanding, and power to make the right decision (1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 2:13).

Sad to say, we don't always want to do what is right. We know what is right, but we refuse to do it. In the story about how God helped Israel escape from Egypt, one king refused to obey God. The king's decision hurt many people and destroyed his country.

GOD TELLS HIS PEOPLE TO BE FAIR (Exodus 11:1–10)

Amos was a prophet or special messenger from God. Amos said, “When the Lord God decides to do something, he will first tell his servants, the prophets” (Amos 3:7, ERV). God told His prophet Moses what will happen next for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Moses gave Pharaoh a strong warning. God was going to punish Pharaoh’s pride and other sins. These sins included Pharaoh’s worship of false gods. Pharaoh also hurt God’s people and made them his slaves. All of the king’s sins caused God to punish Egypt.

What warning did God give Pharaoh before He punished Egypt? Read Exodus 11:1–10 for the answer.

God gave Egypt time: three days of darkness (Exodus 10:22, 23). During this time, God wanted the Egyptians to think about things that happened and what they meant. God gave the Egyptians a final warning. The warning was clear. God gave the Egyptians a final chance to do the right thing.

But Exodus 11:8 says that “Moses was very angry when he left Pharaoh” (NirV). Why was Moses so angry? Maybe because he knew that the 10th punishment would cause a terrible disaster in the lives of many innocent people. All of these things happened because Pharaoh was so stubborn.

Ten is an important number in the Bible. Ten shows us something that is complete, full, or perfect. (Think about the Ten Commandments as a perfect example of God’s law.) The ten punishments that fell on Egypt show God’s full anger at Egypt’s sin.

God is the Judge. He hates pride. He also hates when people aren’t fair. God hates when people are selfish, mean, or hurt other people. God feels love and pity on people who suffer. God will punish evil. God’s work as Judge shows us His love. (Read Psalm 2:12; Psalm 33:5; Psalm 85:11; Psalm 89:14; Psalm 101:1; Isaiah 16:5; Jeremiah 9:24.)

We, too, should try the best we can to be both loving and fair. We easily can love too much or too little. We may pretend not to see wrongs in other people that need to be corrected. We also can do what is right with no love in our hearts. Both ways are wrong. But “the Lord has told you what is good. He has told you what he wants from you: Do what is right to other people. Love being kind to others. And live humbly [with no pride in your heart], trusting your God” (Micah 6:8, ICB).



The ten punishments that fell on Egypt show God’s full anger at Egypt’s sin.

THE PASSOVER (Exodus 12:1–20)

What does God want Israel to do before they leave Egypt? Read Exodus 12:1–20 for the answer.

We may expect God to tell Moses and Aaron about how to get the people ready to leave Egypt. What should they do for old people, mothers with small children, animals, and so on? But God gives Moses and Aaron surprising orders. God tells them how to celebrate the Passover. The Passover was the time when God killed in one night the Egyptians' sons who were born first and saved His people from this punishment. So, God's orders are about worship.

Each family must cook a lamb. The Israelites must not waste any part of the lamb. Every family member must eat part of it. If the family couldn't eat the whole lamb, they must eat their meal together with another family.

What was the Lord going to do for His people when the final punishment fell on Egypt? Read Exodus 12:13, 14 for the answer. What does God's protection symbolize?



The word “passover” is a combination of two words “pass” and “over,” because the punishment “passed over” the homes of the Israelites that were marked with the lamb’s blood.

God commanded the Israelites to celebrate the Exodus each year. The Exodus was the time when God helped His people escape from Egypt. God wanted His people to remember how He saved them in the past. He also wanted His people to trust in Him to save them now and in the future.

Verses 12 and 13 explain the meaning of the Passover: God's punishment will “pass over” the Israelites and not hurt them. The word “passover” is a combination of two words: “pass” and “over,” because the punishment “passed over” the homes of the Israelites that were marked with the lamb's blood. The lamb's blood was the sign of life and God's saving mercy. In the Hebrew language, the name of the Passover is “Pesach,” which comes from an action word that means “to pass over.”

The celebration of the Passover helped the Israelites to remember the mighty and loving things that God did to save His people. This celebration helped the Israelites to become a people and gave them strong reasons for their faith in God.

Why is it so important to remember the good things God did for us in the past? How does our remembering help us trust that God will do good things for us in the future?

PESACH, THE PASSOVER (Exodus 12:17–23)

Read about the Passover feast in Exodus 12:17–23. Why is blood an important part of this new celebration?

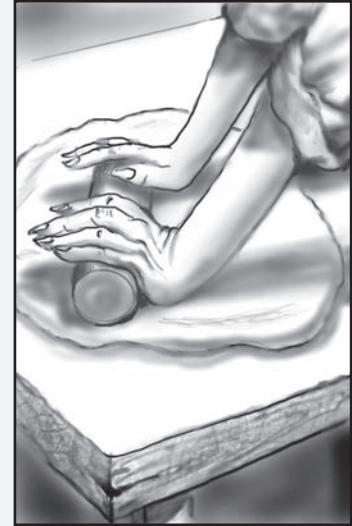
The blood of the killed animal is an important part of the Passover celebration. As we saw already, Passover was the time when God killed in one night the Egyptians' sons who were born first. God saved His people from this punishment. In faith, the people put the blood of the killed lamb on the doorframes of their houses. In this way, the Israelites showed their faith that God would save them from the coming punishment. The blood shows us a powerful example of the Good News that Jesus saves us from our sins!

The Passover lamb must be perfect because it was a symbol of Jesus' perfect offering for our sins. Jesus is "the Lamb of God Who takes away [removes] the sin of the world [the people on the earth]!" (John 1:29, NLV). The animal's blood showed God's protection and was the sign of life at a time of death. The Lord promised, " 'But the blood will be a sign on the houses where you are. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. Nothing terrible will hurt you when I punish the land of Egypt' " (Exodus 12:13, ICB).

Hundreds of years later, Paul wrote about this celebration: "Clean out the old yeast [makes bread rise]. Then you will be new bread with none of the old yeast in you. The Jews killed lambs when they left Egypt. Christ [Jesus] is our lamb. He has already been killed as a gift on the altar to God for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7, NLV).

Yeast was added to dough. The yeast helped the bread to rise. The first time the Bible talks about dough is in the story about the Passover, on the night the Israelites got ready to leave Egypt. God commanded the people to make bread without any yeast. God also commanded the Israelites to remove all yeast from their homes. Yeast is an example of how sin behaves (1 Corinthians 5:6–8). So, the people must not use yeast during the Passover celebration for a whole week.

The bread with no yeast is a word picture for the Savior who did not sin. Jesus gave up His life for us (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 4:15). Priests or religious leaders dipped the hyssop, a special plant, in the blood of a lamb. The hyssop was a word picture for God's loving forgiveness that makes us clean from all sin (Psalm 51:7, NIV). So, the Passover shows us the saving work of Jesus.



God commanded the people to make bread without any yeast.

TEACHING OUR CHILDREN (Exodus 12:24–28)

The writer of the Psalms explains how our children can know about God and His loving care: “Parents will tell their children what you have done. They will retell [tell again] your mighty acts” (Psalm 145:4, ICB). One family should talk to another family about God, the wonderful things He did, and His teachings. In this way, parents will teach their children about Bible truth.

Read Exodus 12:24–28. What important idea do we read about in these verses?

Parents were the first teachers in Israel. God commanded the parents to tell the story of the Exodus to their children. The Exodus was the time when God led His people out of slavery in Egypt. God wanted the parents to talk about the Exodus as their own experience, and not just as something that happened in the past. When the parents celebrated the Exodus, they lived their history again. The Israelites were **in** Egypt when God commanded them to celebrate their freedom **from** Egyptian slavery. So, the whole celebration was an act of faith.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells the Israelites to share the story about their past in a way that makes it their own story. Look at the way the story gets told in these verses: “Then you will speak while the Lord is listening. You will say, ‘My father Jacob was a wanderer from the land of Aram. He went down into Egypt with a few people. He lived there and became the father of a great [mighty] nation. It had huge [big] numbers of people. But the people of Egypt treated us badly [hurt us]. They made us suffer. They made us work very hard. Then we cried out to the LORD. He is the God of our people who lived long ago. He heard our voice. He saw how much we were suffering. The Egyptians were treating us badly. They were making us work very hard. So the LORD used his mighty hand and powerful arm to bring us out of Egypt. He did great [wonderful] and terrifying things. He did signs and amazing things. He brought us to this place. He gave us this land. It’s a land that has plenty of milk and honey’ ” (Deuteronomy 26:5–9, NIV). When parents told their stories to their children in this way, the stories also helped the parents to remember everything God did for them in the past.



When parents told their stories to their children in this way, the stories also helped the parents to remember everything God did for them in the past.

PUNISHMENT FROM GOD (Exodus 12:29, 30)

Read Exodus 12:29, 30, which tells the story about how God killed the Egyptians' sons who were born first. Why did God kill these children? (Also read Hebrews 11:28.)

The last punishment fell on the Egyptians' sons who were born first. This punishment showed God's anger against all the gods of Egypt and the families who worshiped these false gods. As we saw with the earlier punishments, these false gods couldn't save the Egyptians. The 10th punishment showed how useless the gods of the Egyptians really were. This final punishment brought the worst suffering on the Egyptians.

"God punished the pride in the hearts of the Egyptians in every house in the land. The cries of the Egyptians filled the air. The faces of the king and his followers were white with fear and their legs and arms shook. The death of their children filled them with fear."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 280, adapted.

Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was the highest power in the land. The people believed that he was a god of Egypt. So, the people believed his oldest son was the son of a god. Isis was a female god who protected children. Heqet was a female god who helped women during childbirth. Min was a god who helped people make babies. Many other Egyptian gods helped people have babies. But all of these gods had no power. Only the living Lord had power. Moses says, " 'LORD, who among the gods is like [the same as] you? Who is like you? You are majestic [royal] and holy. Your glory fills me with wonder. You do amazing things' " (Exodus 15:11, NIV). Jethro later said, " 'Now I know the LORD is greater [more powerful] than all the gods. They thought they were in control, but look what God did!' " (Exodus 18:11, ERV).

Exodus 1 tells us that the Egyptians killed the newborn sons of Israel on Pharaoh's command. Pharaoh ordered the babies to be killed to weaken the Israelites and to fill them with shame. Now God punishes all the Egyptians. He takes their first-born sons. God will allow us to suffer the same things we do to cause other people to suffer. Our decisions and behavior change other people's lives, for good or evil. The sad truth is that when we do wrong, we aren't the only ones who suffer. Sometimes many other people, including innocent people, will suffer, too. That is the sad truth about sin.



The last punishment fell on the Egyptians' sons who were born first.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Passover,” pages 273–280, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

As we saw already, Passover was the time when God killed in one night the Egyptians’ sons who were born first. God saved His people from this punishment. “The Passover was both a celebration and a word picture. The Passover helped God’s people remember how He helped them escape from slavery in Egypt. Also, the Passover helped the people look forward to the work Jesus would do. Jesus would help His people escape from the slavery to sin. The lamb that was killed was a symbol of ‘the Lamb of God’ [John 1:29, ERV]. This lamb is our only hope of being saved. Paul says, ‘Christ, our Passover lamb, was killed to cleanse [make clean] us.’ 1 Corinthians 5:7 [ICB]. The Passover Lamb must be killed. Then its blood must be painted on the doorframes. In the same way, the blood of Jesus must make us clean from all sin. We must believe that Jesus died for each one of us. We must accept His offering for our sins.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 277, adapted.



During the Seder, Jewish families tell the story about the Exodus, the time when God helped His people escape from slavery in Egypt.

To this day, many Jewish families worldwide celebrate Pesach or Passover. These families have a special feast named a “Seder.” During the Seder, Jewish families tell the story about the Exodus, the time when God helped His people escape from slavery in Egypt. After the story, the families enjoy a special meal together. Just think: Jewish people have been keeping this same feast since the time of the Exodus! Amazing!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Was God really “fair” when He struck down the sons of Egypt? How should we understand this story?
- ❷ What do we mean when we say that we are covered with the blood of Jesus?
- ❸ “Christians must share in the experience of Jesus. They must accept Bible truth and live it so that it becomes the reason for everything they do in life. They must become the same as Jesus in their hearts. They must show God’s love and mercy. . . . The spirit and work of Jesus must become the spirit and work of His followers.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 278, adapted. How do we allow Jesus to do in us what is written in this quote?

TRADING SPORTS FOR GOD

Silva Langa was a high school student in Mozambique. Silva's favorite sport was soccer. Silva loved to play soccer so much. He played whenever he could. Soccer was his god. Silva was a good player. He wanted to play soccer for a living after he finished high school.

Then a friend surprised him when he said, "There are many good things about you, Silva. But you don't have God."

Silva was surprised. Then his friend, Hodes, invited him to church on Saturday. Silva never heard about a church that worshiped on Saturdays. Saturday wasn't a good day for Silva to go to church. Most of Silva's soccer games were on that day.

Hodes was a good friend. So, Silva decided to go to church with him on the next Saturday he was free. Silva was surprised again. Church members were loving. The hymns touched Silva's heart. Silva studied the Bible. Then he gave his life to Jesus and got baptized.

Many of Silva's family members and friends didn't understand why Silva stopped playing soccer on Saturdays.

One of his friends said, "Your faith is crazy."

Someone else said, "Why would anyone go to church when he could go to a soccer game?"

Silva explained his faith as best as he could.

Silva's parents got worried when Silva didn't take the tests to get into college. The tests were on the Sabbath. Silva's parents wondered why he was willing to throw away his future for the Sabbath. Silva suffered at this time. But Peter and the other followers of Jesus gave him hope. Their example gave Silva courage to announce, "We must obey God, not men!" (Acts 5:29, ICB).

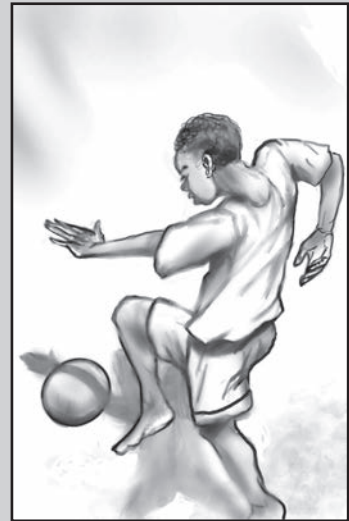
Silva's parents grew more upset when the school called. Silva's teachers wanted to know why Silva wasn't going to Friday night classes. Many family members asked local Seventh-day Adventist leaders to tell Silva to study on Friday nights. In answer, the leaders told Silva's family that God would be with Silva and help him finish high school.

Before long, Silva switched to a Seventh-day Adventist High School. He had no more problems with the Sabbath there. Then he finished high school.

Today, Silva is a businessman. He isn't sorry about giving up his "god" of soccer for the God of heaven. His example of faith caused two of his sisters and some other people to accept Jesus and get baptized.

Silva says, "God blessed my life. I thank Him that today my family respects my beliefs."

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Soccer was Silva's god.

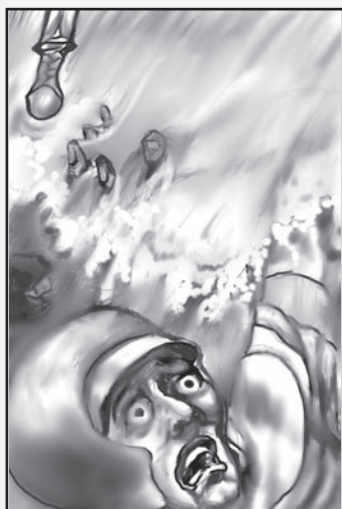
Crossing the Red Sea



SABBATH—AUGUST 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 12:31–36; Exodus 13:1–16; Exodus 13:17–14:12; Exodus 14:13–31; Exodus 15:1–21.

MEMORY VERSE: “Moses answered the people. He said, ‘Don’t be afraid. Stand firm. You will see how the LORD will save you today. Do you see those Egyptians? You will never see them again. The LORD will fight for you. Just be still’ ” (Exodus 14:13, 14, NIV).



This experience also is the most perfect example of how God beat the enemies of His people, the Israelites, and then brought them into the Promised Land.

THE EXODUS is the time when God helped the Israelites escape from slavery in Egypt. The Exodus is the most powerful experience of God’s people in the Old Testament. This experience also is the most perfect example of how God beat the enemies of His people, the Israelites, and then brought them into the Promised Land. The Exodus shows us how God saves us in Jesus, too.

The Israelites were in terrible trouble. They could not escape from slavery on their own. They needed God’s help. We also need God’s help. We can’t escape from sin. Without God’s help, we are hopeless slaves. We need something more powerful than the Exodus. We need the Cross.

Exodus 12–15 are exciting chapters. In them, we read about how Israel leaves the land of Goshen. We also read about the song of Moses. The things that happen in these chapters are amazing. We see some of God’s most powerful miracles and signs.

The Exodus can’t compare with what Jesus did for us at the cross. But the Exodus can help us understand better all the wonderful things that God did for us in Jesus.

GO, AND WORSHIP THE LORD (Exodus 12:31–36)

On the night of Passover, God's final punishment fell on the people who weren't protected with the blood (Exodus 12:12). As we saw already, Passover was the time when God killed in one night the sons who were born first to the Egyptians and saved His people from this punishment. None of the Egyptians escaped because of their education, riches, fame, or job. God's punishment struck all Egyptian families, from Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to Egyptians who were slaves. God also punished the animals who were born first. God destroyed the pride of the Egyptians.

Pharaoh finally gives permission for all the Israelites to leave. What does Pharaoh ask Moses to do? Why was the thing Pharaoh asked for so strange? Read Exodus 12:31–36 for the answer.

When Pharaoh tells the Hebrews to go and worship, he adds, “ ‘And also bless me’ ” (Exodus 12:32, ICB).

And also bless me?

Why does the king of Egypt, who is a “god” on this earth among his people, ask for Moses to bless him? Is Pharaoh finally accepting that God is all-powerful? But how can God bless Pharaoh when he is filled with pride, sin, and wants to fight against Him? Sure, Pharaoh finally gave the Hebrews permission to leave. But Pharaoh didn't agree to let them go because he had a change of heart and finally gave his life to the Lord. Pharaoh let the Hebrews go because he felt defeated. But he wasn't sorry for his sins, as we will later see. Pharaoh just wanted the punishments to stop destroying his kingdom.

Pharaoh felt ashamed. The worst punishment killed all the sons of Egypt who were born first. So, Pharaoh gives permission for Israel to leave Egypt.

“The Egyptians begged [asked] the people of Israel to hurry up and leave the country. ‘If you don't,’ they said, ‘we'll all die!’ ” (Exodus 12:33, NIV).

In the meantime, God made sure that the Israelites didn't leave Egypt empty-handed. The Egyptians gave the Hebrews the things they needed because they wanted to get rid of God's people. But the things the Egyptians gave the Israelites were really a paycheck for hundreds of years of work that God's people did for free as slaves.



The things the Egyptians gave the Israelites were really a paycheck for hundreds of years of work that God's people did for free as slaves.

THE SONS BORN FIRST BELONG TO GOD (Exodus 13:1–16)

God promised to save the Israelites. So, His people needed to be ready. They must believe God would save them. They also needed to act on their beliefs. God told them what they needed to do. With faith, they now needed to do it. James's words about faith and actions fit very well here: if faith "doesn't cause us to do something, it's dead" (James 2:17, NlrV; also read verses 18–20).



God saved the Israelites' sons who were born first because they were protected with the blood.

God saved the Israelite sons who were born first and did not kill them during the final punishment. Read the command in Exodus 13:1–16. Why did God give His people this command? What should this command mean to us today?

God in His mercy protected the Israelite families who were under the blood. With faith, these families marked their doorframes. Now God gave Moses new information about what He wanted His people to do: " 'You must give me every male in Israel who is his mother's first child' " (Exodus 13:2, ERV). This law was for both people and animals.

Everything belongs to God because He made us. So, God owns everything: "The earth and everything on it belong to the LORD. The world [planet] and all its people belong to him" (Psalm 24:1, ERV). " 'The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,' says the Lord of heaven's armies" (Haggai 2:8, ICB). The Israelites' sons who were born first were the first blessing that God gave to His people. These sons were a symbol that the Israelites gave their hearts and lives fully to God. These sons also were a sign that the people understood that everything they owned came from God.

In this special command about the sons who were born first, we also see the idea of God's saving mercy. God saved the Israelites' sons who were born first because they were protected with the blood. So, God saved them from death. In the same way, God will save everyone who is under the blood of Jesus. As Paul writes about Jesus, "The Son paid the price to make us free. In him we have forgiveness of our sins" (Colossians 1:14, ERV).

In the meantime, God gave Moses rules about how the sons should be offered to Him. This offering was part of Israel's celebration. They celebrated how God saved them from slavery. The people must kill the animals, but God in His mercy saved their sons (Exodus 13:12, 13, 15).

CROSSING THE RED SEA (Exodus 13:17—14:12)

Read the story in Exodus 13:17–14:12. How did God lead the Israelites when they left Egypt? What happened next?

God told Moses what He wanted the people to do before they left Egypt. So, when the Israelites finally left, they looked the same as an army (Exodus 6:26; Exodus 7:4; Exodus 12:17, 41, 51; Exodus 14:19, 20; compare with Exodus 13:18). Moses divided the Israelites into groups. Then the Israelites marched the same as an army. Later, when Balaam stood on the hills of Moab, he “saw the Israelites camped in their tribes [family groups]” (Numbers 24:2, ICB).

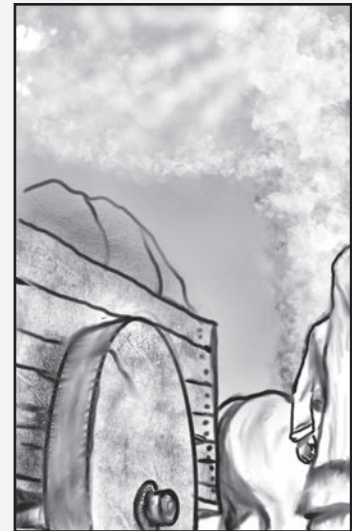
Moses also took the bones of Joseph with him (Exodus 13:19). This information is very important because it shows us Joseph’s faith in God’s promises. Yes, Joseph lived in Egypt with all of its riches. But Joseph never stopped believing God’s promises. Joseph believed that the Lord would remember Israel and lead them to the Promised Land. So, Joseph told the Israelites to carry his bones to Canaan when they left Egypt. When Israel arrived in Canaan, Joseph’s bones were buried at Shechem (Joshua 24:32).

God was with His people in a tall cloud during the day and in a cloud of fire at night. The Israelites could see the tall cloud during the day and the cloud of fire at night and know that God was with them. The Lord lived in the tall cloud and the cloud of fire. He talked with His people from the tall cloud (Exodus 14:24; Numbers 12:5, 6).

In the meantime, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, shows what is really in his heart. He has not changed. He isn’t sorry for his sins. Pharaoh and his army go after their escaped slaves. Pharaoh could not see his own sin.

When the Israelites saw Pharaoh’s army coming, they blamed Moses for trying to kill them. “They said to Moses, ‘What have you done to us? Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in the desert? There were plenty of graves for us in Egypt’ ” (Exodus 14:11, ICB). The people saw God do many miracles for them. God saved their sons who were born first. God saved them when He punished the Egyptians with death. But the Israelites continued not to trust God.

When was the last time you were in deep trouble? Did you trust in God? Or did you doubt Him? What lessons did you learn from that time that can help you the next time trouble comes? (And it will come.)



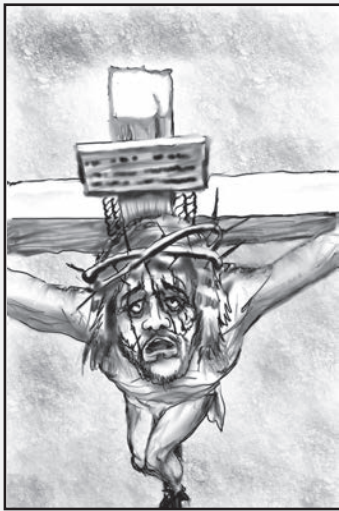
God was with His people in a tall cloud during the day and in a cloud of fire at night.

MARCHING FORWARD WITH FAITH (Exodus 14:13–31)

Read Exodus 14:13–31. The Israelites didn't have much faith in God. What did God do for His people anyway?

Moses trusted God and His promises. So, Moses encouraged the people to trust Him, too. Moses tells the people to do four things. These four things are important lessons for us to remember during hard times:

1. “**‘Don’t be afraid!’**” (Exodus 14:13, ERV). We must trust the Lord because our trust in Him is the only way we can stop being afraid. Isaiah tells us this same thing. God will act for us when we accept Him as our God and Lord (Isaiah 41:10, 13).
2. “**‘Stand still’**” (Exodus 14:13, ICB). While “stand still” means that you stop complaining and expect God to do wonderful things for you, the words also mean something much more. “Stand still” also means we must trust in God and be patient. We must wait for Him to help us, because He will act.
3. “**‘Watch the Lord save you today’**” (Exodus 14:13, ERV). Our faith must grow. To help it grow, we must accept God’s leadership and His help. We also must be thankful for His promise of help. To “watch” means to have faith (when we don’t believe, we are “blind.”) Only God can help us win. Only He can keep us safe and save us. God always is for us. He cares and gives us what we need at the right time.
4. **Know that “‘the Lord will fight for you’**” (Exodus 14:14, ICB). This verse tells us what God will do. He will personally fight for His people. Later, the Egyptians saw this Bible truth when the Lord fought against them for His people (Exodus 14:25). The cross at Calvary also shows us that God will fight for us. On the cross, Jesus won the fight against Satan so that He could give us everlasting life (John 5:24; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 12:10, 11).



The cross at Calvary also shows us that God will fight for us.

God commanded Moses to go forward. God showed Israel His battle plan: (1) The cloud moved behind the people to protect them. (2) Moses stretched His hand over the sea. (3) The Lord separated the water and dried it up with a strong wind. (4) The Israelites walked across the dry ground to the other side. (5) The Egyptians chased them and drowned. They didn't understand that God was doing big things for His people until it was too late (Exodus 14:25).

THE SONG OF MOSES AND MIRIAM (Exodus 15:1–21)

God destroyed the whole Egyptian army. No one was left alive, including Pharaoh, king of Egypt (read Psalm 136:15). The Egyptians lost the fight completely. God's people won completely. No wonder the Jews tell this story to this day.

What is Moses' song about? Read Exodus 15:1–21 for the answer.

This song praises the Lord because He is a mighty warrior. The Lord destroyed the Egyptians because they fought against His people. Moses says that the Lord, his God, is also his strength and song. The Lord saves him. No one is as powerful or wonderful as God. Moses sings, “ ‘You are majestic and holy. Your glory fills me with wonder. You do amazing things’ ” (Exodus 15:11, NIV).

Moses' song is all about God. Moses sings about who God is and what He does. Moses praises God for saving His people. When God is good to us, we want to worship and thank Him. When we are thankful for God's love, we will have a strong spiritual life. Moses sings about God's love because God will lead the people He saved. God will guide them to the place where He will live with them. Moses says that God will build His temple on His own mountain (Exodus 15:17). In the future, God will command the Israelites to build His temple in Jerusalem.

In Revelation 15:2–4, the saved people sing the song of Moses and the song of Jesus, the Lamb. Can you imagine in your mind how beautiful this song will be in heaven?! God's people will praise God for the wonderful and mighty things He did for them. We will praise God for His fair actions. We will praise Him for His holy acts and His holy life.

Notice the last line of the song: “ ‘All people will come and worship before you, because it is clear that you do what is right’ ” (Revelation 15:4, ERV). At that time, everyone will see and understand everything that God did to judge and punish evil on this earth. Then all people will praise God for His work as Judge.

Thinker Immanuel Kant said that if God is fair, then there must be a heaven or afterlife. Why is this idea so true? How can we learn to trust that God will punish all the evil on this earth? How does this idea give you hope?



In Revelation 15:2-4, the saved people sing the song of Moses and the song of Jesus, the Lamb.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Exodus,” pages 281–290, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

God chose a route to the Promised Land that would cause less trouble for His people along the way. “The Israelites didn’t know much about God. They had very little faith in Him. They so easily became afraid and lost hope. They didn’t have weapons and didn’t know how to fight. Their hearts were very sad from long years of slavery. The Israelites had women and children, flocks, and herds to take care of. So, the Lord led them along the Red Sea route to show His people that He was both loving and wise.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 282, adapted.

The *Andrews Bible Commentary* talks about the Song of Moses: “God saved His people. This saving act teaches us that we don’t need to be afraid about the future. The last part of the Song of Moses talks about the future enemies of Israel. Israel would fight them to win the land of Canaan. God would fight for His people and cause their enemies to be filled with fear (Exodus 15:16). When we feel afraid and don’t know what to do, we can remember ‘The Song of Moses.’ This song fills us with hope because it helps us remember a powerful time when God saved His people.”—*Andrews Bible Commentary*, “Exodus” (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2020), page 214, adapted.



“When we feel afraid and don’t know what to do, we can remember ‘The Song of Moses.’ ”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① We have much proof of God’s love and power. So, why do we continue to show so little faith in Him during hard times?
- ② Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, chased the Israelites after they left Egypt. Why would Pharaoh go after them after everything bad that happened to Egypt? What should Pharaoh’s stubborn heart tell us about the danger we will be in if we let sin make our hearts hard?
- ③ For sure, we all have hard times. At the same time, many of us have very good days. We have some very good times when nothing bad happens to us or to our loved ones. Why should we see these times as proof of God’s mercy and protection? Why should we always remember to praise God in the good times, because we don’t know what bad things God is saving us from?

SHARING GOD IN A HOSPITAL

Dmitry Bagal was a Russian Bible worker. Dmitry lived in Germany. Dmitry got sick and went to the hospital. While he was there, he saw different types of people. Many people in the hospital were not Christians. Some people there didn't believe in Christianity or belonged to other religions. Many of these people had questions about God.

A patient who was sick went to the hospital for an operation. But six weeks later, his disease came back. The doctor didn't think there was any hope for the man. So, he didn't operate again. The man couldn't think clearly. He hardly knew who his wife was. The woman wanted to stay with her husband in the hospital during his last days of life. Dmitry gave the woman a book about God and suffering. Then Dmitry prayed with the couple. The prayer moved the wife to tears.

Later that day, Dmitry gave the woman copies of *The Great Controversy* and *The Desire of Ages*. Dmitry told her that the book gave hope to him and many other people. She wanted the books, but not for free. She gave Dmitry 14 euros (that is \$15.00 dollars in US money). That was how much money the woman had in her purse. Dmitry believes he will meet this woman again. If not on the earth, then on the new earth!

Dmitry also met a young man in the hospital. None of the doctors knew what was wrong with him. The young man was from Iran. The young man dropped out of school in Britain and flew to Germany to be healed. The doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong with him. The young man couldn't walk. So, Dmitry pushed him around the hospital yard in a wheelchair nearly every day. The young man wasn't a Christian. But he let Dmitry pray to Jesus for him. As Dmitry prayed day after day, the young man started to get better. Before long, he could stand and walk with some help. Dmitry and the young man talked in German. But because the young man studied in Britain, Dmitry gave him an English language copy of *The Great Controversy*. Months later, Dmitry continued to pray for the young man. These words gave Dmitry hope to keep praying: "But remember, you don't know how your efforts will change the lives of people for the better."—Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry*, page 114, adapted.

During two weeks in the hospital, Dmitry gave away 20 copies of *The Great Controversy* and other books. He also gave many people business cards with QR codes so that they could download the book. Dmitry also filled ten of the hospital's public bookshelves with religious books.

Dmitry says, "I planted many 'seeds' in people's hearts. I pray these seeds will grow. We work under God's leadership. He is in control. We must trust Him to bless our efforts."

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



So, Dmitry pushed him around the hospital yard in a wheelchair nearly every day.



Dmitry Bagal

The Bread and Water of Life



SABBATH—AUGUST 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 15:22–27; Exodus 16:1–36; Exodus 17:1–7; Exodus 18:1–27; 1 Corinthians 10:11.



But the people must learn self-control and obedience. They needed to learn to trust the Lord.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘How long will all you people refuse to obey my commands and teachings? Look, the Lord has made the Sabbath a day of rest for all of you. So on the sixth day he will give you enough food for two days. But on the Sabbath each of you must stay where you are. Do not leave your house.’ So the people rested on the Sabbath” (Exodus 16:28–30, ICB).

AFTER THE ISRAELITES LEFT EGYPT, they went on a journey to the Promised Land. The Israelites didn't know about the dangers and problems that lay ahead of them. They needed to learn many new lessons. Yes, the Lord would lead them and care for them. Yes, the Lord wanted to help them grow. But the people must learn self-control and obedience. They needed to learn to trust the Lord.

The people must follow Moses if they want to win. So, the people need to work together as a community. They must help each other. So much of their spiritual growth depended on how they solved their problems and how they obeyed Moses.

The Chinese people have a famous saying: “The journey of 1,000 miles starts with the first step.” This saying was true about the Israelites. They needed to trust the Lord with every footstep they took. Sad to say, as we will see, the Israelites didn't learn their lessons so easily.

BITTER WATERS (Exodus 15:22–27)

In Bible stories, different people have different parts, good or bad. So, we need to pay careful attention to places, scenes, plans, time, and enemies. But the most important part in any story is the ending and the lessons learned. The same is true with Bible stories.

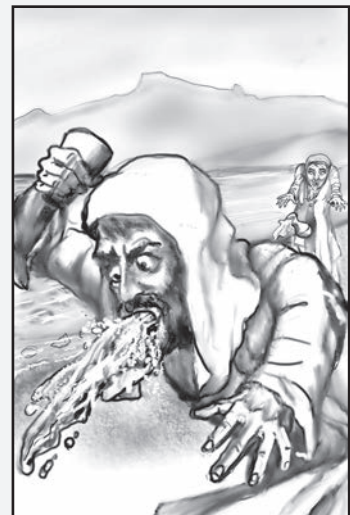
The stories about Israel's desert journey show us that God solves His people's problems. God also brings His people peace. But God's work is made difficult because His people have so little faith. The people complain and disobey God. So, they have many unnecessary troubles, trials, and disasters. They cause many of their own problems because they refuse to stop sinning and trust in God.

After the Israelites cross the Red Sea, what miracle does God do for them first? What happens right before God does this miracle? Read Exodus 15:22–27 for the answers.

The first test of Israel's faith is about their need for water. This need is no surprise. The desert is hot and dry. After three days of traveling, the people finally find water. But they can't drink the water because it is "marah." The word "marah" in the Hebrew language means "bitter." Because the water tastes bitter, Israel has trouble believing that God cares for them. But God shows love and forgiveness for His people and does a miracle. The first miracle for the Israelites is done with a piece of wood. Of course, the Lord, and not the wood, makes the water sweet so that the people can drink it. The people needed to learn two important lessons: (1) They needed to be patient and wait for the Lord's help. (2) They needed to learn that God cooperates with people to get things done.

But the Israelites forgot the many mighty miracles that God did for them. These miracles were the same mighty acts that the Israelites praised God for a short while ago when they sang, " 'Lord, who among the gods is like [the same as] you? Who is like you? You are majestic [royal] and holy. Your glory fills me with wonder. You do amazing things' " (Exodus 15:11, NIV).

Even after the Israelites complain, God promises that He will not give them any of the diseases that made the Egyptians sick (Exodus 15:26). God will protect His people. The people can enjoy this promise only if they obey God.



Because the water tastes bitter, Israel has trouble believing that God cares for them.

BIRDS AND MANNA (Exodus 16:1–36)

Sad to say, the people often forgot that God helped them in the past. God always gave them answers to their problems. But the people let their problems cause them to forget what God did for them and His promise of a wonderful future. God's people today often suffer from the same problem.

What caused the Israelites to complain? What happened next? Read Exodus 16:1–36 for the answers.

Sin in the Bible is often connected with food. In the Garden of Eden, the Fall happened because Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:16, 17; Genesis 3:1–6). When Jesus was in the desert, Satan tried to get Him to sin with food (Matthew 4:3). Esau lost his special blessings as the oldest son because of his hunger for food (Genesis 25:29–34). So often Israel's sins were connected to food and drink! No wonder Moses told the Israelites: “ ‘Man doesn't live only on bread. He also lives on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord’ ” (Deuteronomy 8:3, NIV).

God gave the Israelites manna during their 40-year journey in the desert. Manna, of course, is bread from heaven. God used the manna to teach His people that He made the skies and the earth. God also is the Giver of every good thing. God used the manna to teach His people to keep the seventh-day Sabbath.

Each week, four miracles happened: (1) For six days, God gave His people the manna they needed for the day. (2) On Fridays, God gave His people two times as much manna. (3) The manna didn't spoil from Friday to Sabbath. (4) No manna fell on Sabbath. God did these four miracles each week so the people would remember the Sabbath day and celebrate God's love on that day. God said, “ ‘I have given you the Sabbath day’ ” (Exodus 16:29, NIV).

People like to eat. God made us to enjoy food and eating. The many different types of food that grow from trees and in the dirt show us that God wants us to eat. God also wants us to like what we eat. At the same time, we must be careful. How can we use this wonderful gift of enjoying food to hurt ourselves?



God gave the Israelites manna during their 40-year journey in the desert.

WATER FROM THE ROCK (Exodus 17:1–7)

When you are in the desert, you need plenty of water. God took care of Israel's water problem. The people complained, didn't trust God, and tested Him. Because the people didn't believe, they wanted to go back to Egypt!

Read the story in Exodus 17:1–7. What lesson should the people have learned from what happened?

Moses named the place "Massah." "Massah" means "a testing." Moses also gave the place another name: "Meribah," which suggests "quarreling." The Israelites didn't trust in the Lord. But the Lord gave the Israelites water anyway. These two names should have helped the Israelites not to test God and not to argue with Him (Hebrews 3:7, 8, 15). The people had lots of proof of God's help and power. But they doubted that God was with them.

"Moses hit the stone. But the Son of God caused the life-giving water to flow from the stone. The Son of God stood beside Moses. A cloud hid the Son of God. Moses and the leaders of Israel saw the Lord's glory. The people who stood far away also saw it, too. If the Lord removed the cloud that covered His glory, His shining brightness would have killed everyone."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 298, adapted.

Water is a symbol for life. Without water, there is no life. Every cell in our body needs water. Our bodies are 60% water. A part of our bones are also made of water. So, when God gave the Israelites water in the desert, He showed them that He cared for their needs. For sure, the people could trust Him. But again, they needed to obey Him.

Many hundreds of years later, Paul tells his readers that the experience of the Israelites in the desert was very special. Jesus Himself led His people. He also gave them water (Psalm 78:15, 16). Jesus took care of their other needs, too. He took care of their bodies and spirits. Paul announced: "That Rock [stone] was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4, WE). Jesus was the Giver of life on earth and everlasting life in heaven. Just as a stone is firm and strong, God firmly led His people. We can count on Jesus because He always keeps His promises.

What are some things that you need to trust God with? How can you learn to wait for Him to act in His time?



"Moses hit the stone. But the Son of God caused the life-giving water to flow from the stone."

JETHRO (Exodus 18:1–27)

Jethro visited Moses. Jethro, who is also named Reuel (Exodus 2:18), was Moses' father-in-law. Jethro brought with him Moses' wife, Zipporah, and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. When Moses heard that his family was coming to see him, he went out to welcome them.

Read Exodus 18:1–27. What important things in the history of Israel happened in these verses?



**Moses accepted Jethro's
wise advice
(Exodus 18:24).**

Jethro came because he heard about the amazing things God did for Israel. "Moses told Jethro everything the Lord had done for the Israelites. He told what the Lord did to Pharaoh [king of Egypt] and the people of Egypt. He told about all the problems they had along the way. And he told his father-in-law how the Lord saved the Israelites every time there was trouble" (Exodus 18:8, ERV).

Jethro praised God for everything He did to help His people: " 'Praise the Lord! He freed [saved] you from the power of Egypt. He saved you from Pharaoh. Now I know the Lord is greater [more powerful] than all the gods. They [the Egyptians and their gods] thought they were in control, but look what God did!' " (Exodus 18:10, 11, ERV).

This story shows us a powerful example of God's work for His people. When God helped Israel escape Egypt, He showed everyone who He was and what He can do for the people who love and obey Him.

At the same time that Jethro learned about the true God, he offered something of worth to God's people: wise and helpful advice about leadership. Moses needed to set up a government for Israel. This government must include fair laws and rules. Moses needed men who were good and honest judges. Jethro wisely told Moses to choose men who (1) obeyed God, (2) were dependable, and (3) honest. Moses also should choose good men to be leaders over different groups of people. The biggest groups would include a thousand people. Some of the smaller groups would have a hundred people. Other groups would have only fifty people, and the smallest group would include only ten people. In this way, Moses' heavy workload would be reduced. Then Moses would have more time to solve Israel's most difficult problems. Moses accepted Jethro's wise advice (Exodus 18:24). Moses chose men to help him lead and judge the people (also read Deuteronomy 1:9–18).

THE BREAD AND WATER OF LIFE (1 Corinthians 10:11)

Why were the Old Testament stories written down? What reason does Paul give? Read 1 Corinthians 10:11 for the answer.

Paul explains that all the things that happened to the Israelites are examples and warnings for Jesus' followers. These stories will help us avoid the same troubles the Israelites had. So, that is why we must learn from their examples. This advice is important for us "who are living in the last days [end times] of the world [human history]" (1 Corinthians 10:11, WE). God gives His people the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us "a spirit of power and of love and of a good [having no disease or sickness; healthy and strong] mind" (2 Timothy 1:7, NLV). Then God's people can make correct decisions and follow His teaching. Jesus is the Giver of new life (John 14:6). Only Jesus can help us offer ourselves as "a living and holy gift given to God. . . . Do not act like [the same as] the sinful [evil] people of the world [on this earth]. Let God change your life. First of all, let Him give you a new mind [thoughts and feelings]. Then you will know what God wants you to do. And the things you do will be good and pleasing and perfect" (Romans 12:1, 2, NLV).

Later on, Jesus used the Old Testament stories to teach important lessons. Jesus used the word pictures of manna and water to teach spiritual truths about Himself. Jesus is the same Lord who led His people in the desert.

Read John 4:7–15 and John 6:31–51. What important Bible truths do these verses teach us?

The Samaritan woman learned that Jesus offers something that she won't get anywhere else. The human heart wishes for peace, joy, and happiness that comes from God. So, only God can give us these things (Psalm 42:1, 2).

Later, Jesus says that God, and not Moses, gave His people the manna or bread from heaven. Then Jesus announced: " 'I am the bread that gives life' " (John 6:35, ERV). Three times Jesus said that He is the Bread that gives life (John 6:35, 41, 48). Jesus gave the Hebrews manna, the bread from heaven. The water from the stone also was Jesus' gift to His thirsty people in the desert. Only Jesus can satisfy our spiritual thirst and hunger.



Jesus used the word pictures of manna and water to teach spiritual truths about Himself.



“The Amalekites made a promise in front of their gods to destroy the Hebrews.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “From the Red Sea to Sinai,” pages 291–302, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

Soon after God gave His people water in the desert, Israel met a new danger (read Exodus 17:8–16). The Amalekites attacked them. The Amalekites loved to fight and go to war. “The Amalekites knew about God’s love, mercy, and His power. But the Amalekites didn’t respect God. They fought against His control. The Amalekites made fun of the miracles that Moses did in front of the Egyptians. The Amalekites also made fun of other people for being afraid of the Israelites. The Amalekites made a promise in front of their gods to destroy the Hebrews. The Amalekites promised to not allow one Hebrew to escape alive. The Amalekites bragged that Israel’s God was powerless to stand against them. The Israelites did nothing wrong to the Amalekites. The Israelites didn’t do anything to cause the Amalekites to hate them or want to destroy them. The Amalekites wanted to destroy God’s people because they hated God. They wanted to show they hated God. That’s why the Amalekites wanted to destroy His people. The Amalekites were terrible sinners. Their awful sins came to God’s attention and needed to be punished. In His mercy, God continued to invite the Amalekites to confess their sins and to stop sinning. But when the Amalekite men attacked the tired and helpless Israelites, they went too far in God’s eyes. Their action caused God to destroy them as a people.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 300, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Think some more about how Jethro learned about the true God from what God did for His people (Read Exodus 18:8–10.) Do we learn about God in the same way today? If yes, ask yourself and your class: What does my church show other people about God?
- ❷ Some people believe that the Old Testament God is mean and nasty, and Jesus is loving. How does 1 Corinthians 10:4 show us why this belief is wrong?
- ❸ Read again Ellen G. White’s quote above about the Amalekites. They had the chance to learn about God. Compare them with Jethro. What lessons can we learn about why God judged the Amalekites and other people groups that the Israelites met?

“DO YOU LIKE TO READ BOOKS?”

Dmitry Bagal was a Russian Bible worker. He lived in Germany. After his operation, the doctors sent him to rest and heal in Lower Bavaria.

While Dmitry was there, he walked over to a group of people at a Greek restaurant. The people told Dmitry that the restaurant was closed. Dmitry asked them a question, “Do you like to read books?”

One man answered. The man was Italian. He said he enjoyed watching movies more than reading books. The man read only one book in his life, the Bible. Dmitry gave the man *The Great Controversy*. Dmitry explained that this book gave an interesting explanation for history. The book also talked about the worldwide war between good and evil. The man read the back cover. Then he said, “I really want this book!” He gave Dmitry some money for the book.

Another day, Dmitry saw a stranger on a bench. The man said that he didn’t like to read. But his wife did. Dmitry gave the man a copy of *The Great Controversy* for his wife. The man read the back cover and said that he wanted to read the book, too!

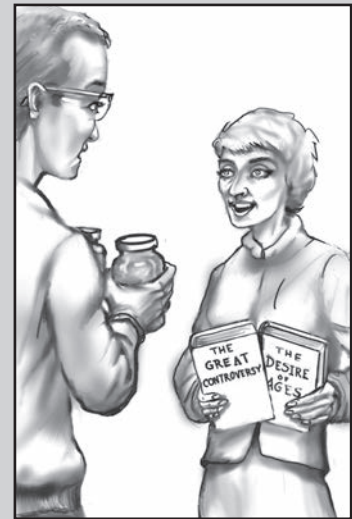
Dmitry continued his walk. He passed a car with a bumper sticker that said, “God does miracles in Germany.” Dmitry wanted to meet the car’s owner. So, he rang the doorbell of the house in front of the car. On the door, Dmitry saw a sign that said: “Honey from our own beehives.” When a woman opened the door, Dmitry asked her about the honey. Dmitry and the woman talked about honey for a few minutes. Then they talked about faith. The woman said that Jesus healed her of a disease. The healing was a miracle. Dmitry bought a jar of honey. Then he gave the woman the choice of a book as a gift: *The Desire of Ages* or *The Great Controversy*. The woman chose *The Desire of Ages*. Then she thanked Dmitry and gave him a second jar of honey as a gift. Dmitry thanked her with the other book, *The Great Controversy*. Both Dmitry and the lady were very happy with their meeting.

During his month of rest and healing, Dmitry gave away almost 50 copies of *The Great Controversy*. He decided to change the type of work he does for God in Germany.

“Because I enjoy sharing books so much, I’m going to be a Bible book worker in Germany.”

This Inside Story shows Church Growth Task #2 for the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” Plan. Task #2 is: “We will help the Adventist church grow strong in new ways. We will share Jesus with people who don’t know Him.” Read more at IWillGo.org.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY

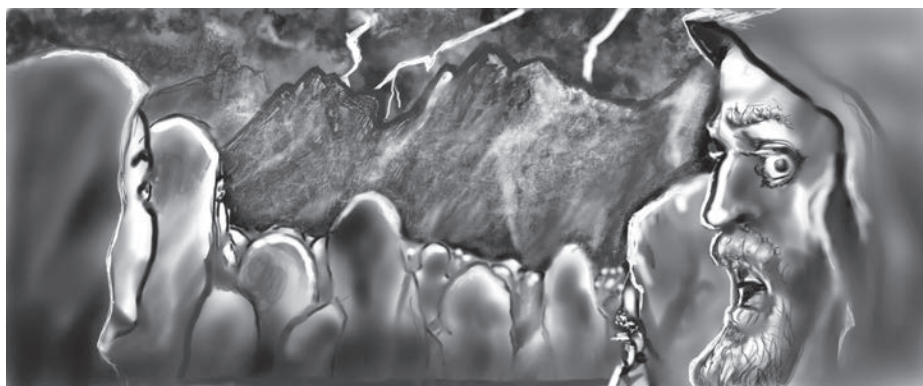


Dmitry thanked her with the other book, *The Great Controversy*.



Dmitry Bagal

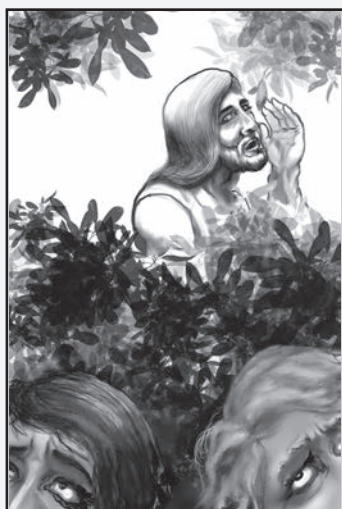
Promise at Sinai



SABBATH—AUGUST 16

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 19:1–8; Exodus 19:9–25; Exodus 20:1–17; James 1:23–25; Romans 3:20–24.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘You have seen for yourselves what I did to Egypt. You saw how I carried you on the wings of eagles and brought you to myself. Now obey me completely. Keep my covenant. If you do, then out of all the nations [people groups] you will be my special treasure. The whole earth is mine. But you will be a kingdom of priests [spiritual leaders] to serve me. You will be my holy nation’ ” (Exodus 19:4–6, NIV).



After Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God. God went looking for them.

WHERE DID GOD lead Israel after He helped them escape from Egypt? To the Promised Land, right? Where else? While the answer may be correct, it is also, in a way, wrong. God tells us the real answer: “ ‘You people saw what I did to the people of Egypt. You saw that I carried you out of Egypt like an eagle and brought you here to me’ ” (Exodus 19:4, ERV). So, the correct Bible answer shows us that the Lord brought His people to Himself. This was His plan.

When people leave God, He goes looking for them. We see this Bible truth in the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God. God went looking for them. He called out, “ ‘Where are you?’ ” (Genesis 3:9, NKJV). God always makes the first move. That's why Jesus says: “ ‘All you who work hard! All you who carry heavy loads! Come to me! I will give you rest’ ” (Matthew 11:28, 29, WE).

God invites us all to come to Him. Our future depends on how we answer.

AT SINAI (Exodus 19:1–8)

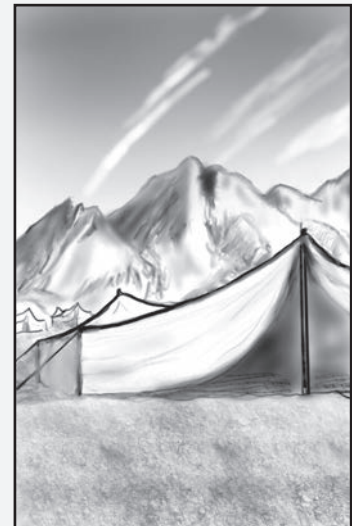
What did God promise His people at Sinai? Read Exodus 19:1–8.

God led the Israelites to Sinai. There, God would give His people the Ten Commandments. Today, most Bible thinkers believe that Sinai is Jebel Musa. Jebel Musa means the mountain of Moses. Jebel Musa is 7,497 feet high. Many modern Bible thinkers believe Jebel Musa is the place where Moses met with God several times (read Exodus 3:1; Exodus 19:2; Exodus 24:18). Years later, Elijah met God on this mountain (1 Kings 19:8). Also, Jebel Musa is the same mountain where God commanded Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 3:1, 10). At that time, God told Moses that he would worship God with Israel in the place where they now met. That would be a sign for Moses that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob led them (Exodus 3:12).

After two months of traveling, the Israelites arrived at Sinai (Exodus 19:1). The Israelites stayed there for almost a year (compare Exodus 19:1 with Numbers 10:11, 12). During this year, God gave Moses many laws, as we see in Exodus 19–40; Leviticus 1–27; and Numbers 1:1–10:10. Israel's stay at Mount Sinai is important to the first five books of Moses. While Israel stayed at Sinai, they became God's chosen people. Israel was the only people group at that time who was not worshipping false gods.

God makes the Promise between Himself and Israel at Sinai. The people agree to obey God and continue their relationship with Him. If they obey, God promises to make Israel His special treasure. Israel will be a kingdom of priests or spiritual leaders. They will be a holy people.

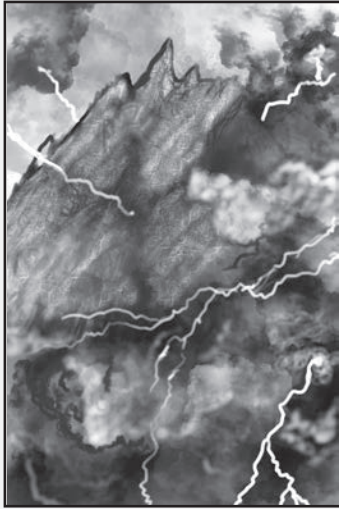
What does it mean to be a holy people? To be a holy people means to give yourself fully to God and to serve Him with all your heart. To be a holy people means to show God's love and mercy to other people. God wanted Israel to be a kingdom of priests who would help other people meet God. As a kingdom of priests, God's people would lead other people to Him and teach them His ways and laws. God wanted Israel to be His special people because He wanted Israel to share with people their knowledge about Him. God's Promise was the same as a legal contract. This contract showed God's people the relationship that God wanted with them (read Exodus 6:7; Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 24:7; Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10; Revelation 21:3).



God makes the Promise between Himself and Israel at Sinai. The people agree to obey God and continue their relationship with Him.

GETTING READY FOR THE GIFT (Exodus 19:9–25)

How did God get Israel ready for the gift of the Ten Commandments? Read Exodus 19:9–25 for the answer.



**When His glory came,
“there was thunder and
lightning with a thick cloud
on the mountain.”**

God gave the Israelites His law at Sinai. But first, God told His people how to get ready for the law. Israel must be clean on the outside. Their being clean showed that they fully served God. The people also needed to be ready for God’s glory. When His glory came, “there was thunder and lightning with a thick cloud on the mountain. And there was a very loud blast from a trumpet. All the people in the camp were frightened” (Exodus 19:16, ICB).

The Ten Commandments show us who God is. The Ten Commandments also show us how we must live our lives. These rules are everlasting and for everyone. The Bible tells us that God spoke the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:19; Exodus 20:1; Deuteronomy 5:4, 5, 24). God also wrote down His law (Exodus 24:12; Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 5:22). God gave Moses the law two times as a special gift (Exodus 32:19; Exodus 34:1; Deuteronomy 10:1, 2).

In the book of Exodus, the Ten Commandments are also named “the agreement” (from the word “‘edut” in the Hebrew language; Exodus 31:18, ERV). The Ten Commandments are named “the words of the agreement” (from the words “dibre habberit” in the Hebrew language; Exodus 34:28, ERV), too. In the book of Deuteronomy, God writes the Ten Commandments on “two pieces of stone” (Deuteronomy 9:11, NLV; also read verses 9 and 15). The books of Exodus and Deuteronomy name God’s law “the Ten Words.” In the Hebrew language, “the Ten Words” is “‘aseret haddebarim,” from the word “dabar,” which means “word, sentence, matter, thing, speech, story, promise, or something that is said.” (Read Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; Deuteronomy 10:4.)

There are two copies of the Ten Commandments in the Bible (Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 5:6–21), with only small things that are different between them. Moses spoke the commandments in Deuteronomy to Israel almost 40 years after Sinai, right before the people entered the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 1:3, 4; Deuteronomy 4:44–47). So, that’s why the two copies are just a little different. When Paul said that the law was love (Romans 13:8–10), he used a quote from the Ten Commandments. God’s law is love because He is a God of love (1 John 4:16).

GOD'S SPECIAL GIFT: HIS TEN COMMANDMENTS
(Exodus 20:1–17)

What are the laws of the Ten Commandments? How are they grouped together? Read Exodus 20:1–17 for the answers.

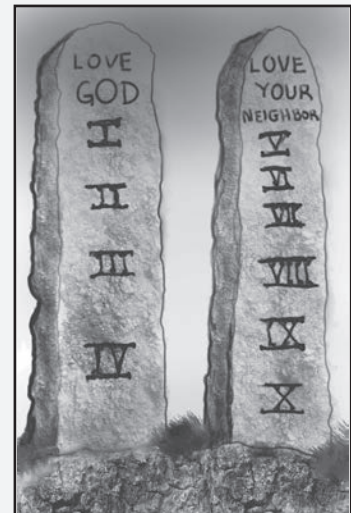
Do you see that the chapter on the Ten Commandments doesn't start with the commands? The chapter starts with the loving things God did for His people: " 'I am the Lord your God. I brought you out of the land of Egypt where you were slaves' " (Exodus 20:2, ICB). Before the Lord tells Israel His plans for them, He saves them from slavery. God wanted His people to obey Him because they loved Him and were thankful for everything that He did for them.

What is the one word that shows us what the whole law means? The answer is love (Romans 13:10). The most important commandment is the command to love. We show our love in two ways: love for God (Deuteronomy 6:5), and love for people (Leviticus 19:18).

In the first four commandments, we see what it means to love God. In the last six commandments, the law shows us how to love our neighbor. The law starts with honoring God more than anything else. Then the law continues with respecting other people. Let us look at each law, one by one:

1. The 1st commandment: Honor and worship God first above everything and everyone in life.
2. The 2nd commandment: Honor God and don't replace Him with a false god of any type.
3. The 3rd commandment: Respect God's name, which includes who He is and what He does.
4. The 4th commandment: Honor the 7th-day Sabbath, God's day of rest and worship.
5. The 5th commandment: Respect parents.
6. The 6th commandment: Respect life.
7. The 7th commandment: Respect marriage.
8. The 8th commandment: Respect people's property.
9. The 9th commandment: Respect other people.
10. The 10th commandment: Respect yourself so that no selfishness lives in your heart.

As Jesus said: " 'If you love me, obey my commands' " (John 14:15, NIV; also read 1 John 4:20, 21). As we see, true obedience is another way of our showing our love and thankfulness for Jesus. We show our love for Him in a powerful way when we are loving and kind to other people.



In the first four commandments, we see what it means to love God. In the last six commandments, the law shows us how to love our neighbor.

WHAT THE LAW CAN DO (James 1:23–25)



God's commands are the same as a big fence. Inside the fence, we are safe.

The law of God shows us His love. God is holy and good. His law is holy and good, too. Paul agrees: "So the law is holy. The commandment also is holy and right and good" (Romans 7:12, NIV).

The Bible teaches us that the law is a very good thing (Matthew 5:17, 18; John 14:15; 1 Corinthians 7:19). You may write poems about the law (Psalm 119). You may sing about the law (Psalm 19). You may think about the law, day and night (Psalm 1:2; Joshua 1:8). The law helps keep us safe from evil. The law gives us wisdom, understanding, health, success, and peace (Deuteronomy 4:1–6; Proverbs 2, 3).

God's commands are the same as a big fence. Inside the fence, we are safe. If we go outside the fence, then danger, problems, and death wait for us (Genesis 2:16, 17; James 2:12).

The law also leads us to Jesus. Jesus forgives our sins and changes our lives (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 1:7–9). So, the law is the same as our teacher and a guard who watches over us (Galatians 3:24).

Read James 1:23–25. What is James saying in these verses? How do these words help us understand what the law does and why the law is important, even if it can't save us?

A mirror can show you all your skin problems. But the mirror can't heal your skin. God's law is the same as the mirror. You can look into the mirror as long as you want. But the mirror won't make your pimples or rash go away. The same thing is true with keeping the law. We can do our best to keep it. But even our best efforts to keep the law won't save us.

We must believe that God saves us. We can't earn this gift with our good behavior. So, some Christians think that we don't need to worry about keeping the law anymore. But this idea is not correct. The law tells us what sin is (Romans 7:7). The law shows us exactly why we need the Good News about Jesus to save us.

Can you obey God's law in your own strength? Are your efforts good enough to save you? What does your answer tell you about why you need the Good News about Jesus?

THE LAW AS GOD'S PROMISE FOR US
(Romans 3:20–24)

Read Romans 3:20–24. In these verses, Paul is very clear that we can't save ourselves with our law keeping. So, why does Paul say we need the law in our lives?

Moses uses the Hebrew word “debarim” to talk about the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; Deuteronomy 10:4). This word doesn't really mean “commandments,” but “words.” The Hebrew word “dabar,” which means “word,” also can mean a “promise.” That is why in many parts of the Bible, the Hebrew word “dabar” is used to show the idea of a promise.

Ellen G. White helps us understand this idea: “The ten commandments . . . are ten promises.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 1, page 1105. So, we should understand the Ten Commandments as promises from God. These promises will lead us on the right road. When we follow this road (God's law), God will bless us and do wonderful things for us. But we must obey His law.

Read Romans 10:4. In this verse, Paul says that Jesus is the “end” of the law (KJV). How should we understand Paul's words?

Paul says that Jesus is the “telos [end]” of the law. Paul doesn't mean that Jesus threw out the law or got rid of it. Paul means that Jesus is the whole reason for the law. So, Jesus' death on the cross doesn't mean that we no longer need the law or that it stopped being important.

Paul says that the law is very important and that we always will need it to lead and teach us (Romans 3:31; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6). The word “telos” is not about time. There won't come a time when we stop needing God's law. We always will need it. So, we should not say that Jesus got rid of the law in any way. Jesus is the whole reason for the law. The law shows us who Jesus is.

How does the law show us Jesus? What does the law show us about ourselves that helps us understand our need for Him?



These promises will lead us on the right road.



When we keep God's laws because we love and feel grateful to Him, we will be in a saving relationship with Him.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Law Given to Israel,” pages 303–310, and “Satan’s Enmity Against the Law,” pages 331–342, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“God did some spectacular things when He spoke His law to His people. When the people saw all these amazing things, they knew that God’s law was very important. God wanted His people to understand that everything connected with His worship was special and holy.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 303, adapted.

This rule about how we should honor God is important today. When we understand that God is royal and all-powerful, we will worship Him with respect. When we see God’s glory, our hearts become thankful. Then we will empty our hearts of all pride. The more we see God’s holy love, the more we will see that we are not perfect. We will want Him to change our lives. More and more, we will want to be the same as Jesus in our hearts.

When we see ourselves as we really are, we will depend completely on Jesus to save us. At the same time, Jesus said that if we accept God as our Lord and Savior, His commands are not hard to obey (Matthew 11:28–30). Jesus said that His law will continue forever (Matthew 5:17–20). When we keep God’s laws because we love and feel grateful to Him, we will be in a saving relationship with Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① The people got ready for God to give them His law. The things they did helped them to understand that God’s law was special and holy. Today, as a church, what things can we do to help us remember that God is holy? Or have we slowly and somehow lost this respect for God? Explain.
- ② Think about this part of God’s promise: “ ‘I will be your God. And you will be my people’ ” (Leviticus 26:12, NIV). What does this Promise mean to us today? How should we show this Bible truth in our personal lives and in the church, as a whole?
- ③ When God commands us to do something, He gives us the strength to do it. (Read Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 333.) How do we live this promise?

A WISH COMES TRUE

Eniah Ngulube grew up in Zambia in a non-Adventist home that kept the seventh-day Sabbath. Eniah's parents went to a church that also taught that sick people should refuse medicine. Sick people shouldn't go to doctors. The sick should ask only for the church leaders to pray for them to get well. If a sick person died, church members accepted that as God's plan.

Eniah loved her parents and their faith. But as she grew up, she and her sister started going to church on Sundays. Five of Eniah's sisters and brothers joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They kept worshiping on Saturdays. Their parents didn't care where the children went to church.

As a teenager, Eniah also wanted to become a nurse. She wanted to care for the sick. She also wanted to study at Mwami Adventist School of Nursing in the town of Chipata. The school was about 20 miles away from her home. When Eniah finished high school, she told her brother, Kenson, about her wish. Kenson was a Seventh-day Adventist church leader. Kenson liked the idea of his sister studying in a Seventh-day Adventist school. So, Kenson called a church president to ask when his sister could sign up for classes. The church president called the nursing school. Classes were already filled with students. But a day or two later, the school found a place for Eniah. Eniah was so happy. She was surprised they let her in because she wasn't a Seventh-day Adventist. Her wish came true!

A week after Eniah arrived at school, the school held religious meetings for a week. Eniah listened to the speaker talk about baptism in water. Eniah thought, "Let me get baptized in water, the same as Jesus. He is coming soon." At the end of the week, Eniah was baptized in water and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Eniah, and other students like her, have learned so much about Jesus at Mwami Adventist School of Nursing. Many non-Adventists students are coming to the school and accepting Jesus. The school shares the love of Jesus with new students every year.

Pray for the Good News about Jesus to be announced in Zambia and in other African countries. Our 13th Sabbath Offering this quarter will go to many of these countries in Africa.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



At the end of the week, Eniah was baptized in water and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Students at the Mwami Adventist School of Nursing.

Living the Law



SABBATH—AUGUST 23

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 21:1–32; Exodus 22:16–23:9; Exodus 23:20–33; Matthew 5:38–48; Romans 12:19.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Say this [message] to the people of Israel: “You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven. Do not make any gods other than Me. Do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold” ’ ” (Exodus 20:22, 23, NLV).



The law protects us from dangers and disasters.

GOD WANTED HIS PEOPLE to be different from the other people around them. God wanted the Israelites to be a community of faith who lived under His leadership. Everyone would obey His law. Judges would punish people who broke the law. Priests or spiritual leaders would teach the law. Parents also had an important part in this work.

The laws of a country show us its beliefs. They also show us who the lawmaker is. When Pharaoh, king of Egypt, ordered the Egyptians to kill every newborn Hebrew boy, this law showed us the evil in his heart. Compare Pharaoh and his evil law with a king who makes a law that every 18-year-old person in his kingdom gets to go to school for free. Many people would think this law was proof that the king was kind, giving, and wanted his citizens to succeed.

God's law shows us who He is. He is loving, good, and holy. The law shows us how God punishes evil. The law is fair, and so is God. The law protects us from dangers and disasters. We must respect God and other people. We must love God's law. When we do these things, we live the law, just as God planned for His people, the Israelites, to do.

MORE LAWS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE (Exodus 21:1–32)

At Sinai, God gave Israel the Ten Commandments. The law taught God's people how to live holy lives. The people must stay connected to God for that to happen. So, God gave His people more laws for everyday life. The judges were responsible for protecting these laws and helping people to follow them correctly.

"Not long ago, the people were slaves. Their minds weren't ready to fully understand the Ten Commandments. So, God gave His people more laws for everyday life. These laws helped the people understand the Ten Commandments better. The leaders of Israel used these laws to judge problems in Israel. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments in front of the people. But God gave the laws for everyday life to Moses in private. Then Moses gave them to the people."
—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 310, adapted.

Read Exodus 21:1–32. What laws did God give the people about Hebrew slaves, killing, and body injuries?

We can read the laws that God gave His people for everyday life in Exodus 21:1–23:19. God gave these laws to His people to stop evil and to build a strong community.

The slavery laws were special. Slavery among the Israelites was different from slavery in the Middle Ages or in modern times. Hebrew slaves were protected. The Israelites cared about them. In the Middle Ages and in modern times, servants and slaves were property. They belonged to their owners who could do whatever they wished with their slaves. Bible laws about slavery were different from modern slave laws or slave laws in the Middle Ages. In the Bible, slavery was limited to six years (Exodus 21:1, 2; Jeremiah 34:8–22). In the seventh year, all slaves must be allowed to go free. A slave could choose to stay with his master at this time. Masters had to give their slaves or servants the Sabbath off (Exodus 20:9, 10). Masters also must take care of their servants' basic needs.

In most places today, slavery is not legal. Sad to say, slavery continues to be a problem. What are ways that we see slavery today? What can we do to fight against it?



God gave these laws to His people to stop evil and to build a strong community.

SOME MORE LAWS (Exodus 22:16–23:9)

**God told the judges
what to do if someone's
bull attacked
his neighbor's bull.**

God in His mercy taught the judges of Israel how to solve problems about owning property. God told the judges what to do if someone's bull attacked his neighbor's bull. Or if a person stole an animal from someone's flock and sold it. Or if animals ate in a crop field or grape field that someone else owned. Or what to do when a person borrowed something from someone, and the borrowed thing got stolen. Or what to do if a rented animal was injured or died (Exodus 21:33–22:15).

Read about the laws in Exodus 22:16–23:9. What problems do these laws help to solve? How do they solve them?

God's laws talked about different problems. There were laws against shaming people or putting them down. God did not want His people to use anyone in any way at all. In His mercy, God corrects the evil things we want to do and controls the bad things we want to do. God wanted to keep communities safe, to remove evil, and for people to have good personal relationships with each other. So His people must be fair and loving in all their actions and decisions.

Read Exodus 23:10–19. What important topics and celebrations do these verses talk about?

The Sabbath and the festivals were about worship. These celebrations helped people remember special things that happened in Israel's history. Worship was the reason for everything the Israelites did. So, God gave the Israelites many important rules to help them understand how to worship Him. God made the Sabbath at Creation (Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:8–11). The Sabbath was connected to many important happenings in Israel's history: to the Exodus and to God's saving mercy (Deuteronomy 5:12–15). The Exodus was the time when God helped the Israelites escape from slavery in Egypt. In a powerful way, the Sabbath helps us remember that God made us. The Sabbath also helps us remember God as our Lord and Savior (Mark 2:27, 28).

The Israelites also celebrated three important festivals every year: (1) the Passover in the spring; (2) Pentecost seven weeks later; and (3) the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall.

GOD'S FIRST PLAN (Exodus 23:20–33)

How did God plan to get the Promised Land for His people? Read Exodus 23:20–33 for the answer.

God didn't plan for the Israelites to fight for their new land. God would give them the land. God promised the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God wanted to give Israel the land as a special gift.

The Lord showed Israel how He would give them the Promised Land. We can see for ourselves God's plan in the story about how God helped Israel cross the Red Sea: God fought for His people. God gave them a total win over the Egyptians, who planned to kill them (Exodus 14:13, 14). The Egyptians were destroyed because God helped Israel. In the same way, God later destroyed the Assyrian army of King Sennacherib. The Assyrian army was big and had better training and weapons than Israel's army. But God saved Israel without their needing to fight. God fought for Israel and won because King Hezekiah believed God's promise from Isaiah (2 Kings 19:35; Isaiah 37:36).

God told Abraham that He wouldn't give his future children the Promised Land right away. They must wait 400 years (Genesis 15:13–16). Why? Because God in His mercy wanted to save the people in the land of Canaan, who were very evil. So, God gave them time to confess their sins. But the people continued to fight against God and His law. So when the people in this land made their final decision to turn against God forever, God was ready to give their land to the Hebrews as their new home.

Also, God promised that He would cause the people in Canaan to leave in two special ways: (1) God would fill their hearts with fear, and (2) God would send hornets to drive them out. Before the Israelites arrived in the new land, their enemies would run away (Exodus 23:27, 28).

The Angel of God has an important part in winning the Promised Land for Israel. This Angel or Messenger was Jesus. Jesus led Israel, won land, and protected His people and their land. Jesus was in the tall cloud that led them during the day and the cloud of fire that led them during the night. Israel needed to pay careful attention and listen to Jesus because He was their Leader (Exodus 23:21). If the people didn't obey Jesus or believe in His leadership, they would have trouble succeeding.



Jesus was in the tall cloud that led them during the day and the cloud of fire that led them during the night.

AN EYE FOR AN EYE (Matthew 5:38–48)

Judges needed to examine the injury. Then they would decide how much money someone owed for the injury and told him to pay it.

Read Matthew 5:38–48. In these verses, Jesus discusses the Old Testament law about revenge and getting even. What does Jesus say this law means? How should we understand this law today in our own lives?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses quotes from the Old Testament. The people who heard Jesus' sermon knew these verses well. But Jesus wasn't satisfied with how the Jewish leaders explained these verses. For hundreds of years, the teachings of the Jewish leaders hid the true meaning of the Bible more and more. The leaders made their own man-made rules more important than Bible truth. Worse, these leaders changed the real meaning of the verses. In His Sermon, Jesus helps the people understand the real meaning of these laws. Jesus wanted to correct some of the false teachings about these Old Testament laws.

The verse from Exodus 21:24 talks about "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Jesus uses this quote in Matthew 5:38. This rule is named the "lex talionis," or the law for getting even. This verse from Exodus 21:24 also is used in other places in the Bible (Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21).

God made this law to stop people from taking personal revenge against anyone. God wanted to stop people from getting even without first judging what happened. Judges needed to examine the injury. Then they would decide how much money someone owed for the injury and told him to pay it. The judges did this work to stop people from "taking the law into their own hands." The judges must be fair. Their decisions must honor God's law.

Jesus gave these special laws to Moses. Jesus understood the reason for this law. So, Jesus could use this law in the correct way. The reason for the law was to make sure that the judges' decisions were fair. The law, if followed, would repair broken relationships and bring peace.

In a way, a fair decision includes satisfying our need for revenge. That's because we must try to make things right at the same time that we try to be fair.

In the future, God will make everything right. How should this idea help you live with anything in life that isn't fair right now?

REVENGE (Romans 12:19, NlrV)

“ ‘My dear friends, don’t try to get even. Leave room for God to show his anger. It is written, “I am the God who judges people. I will pay them back,” (Deuteronomy 32:35) says the Lord’ ” (Romans 12:19, NlrV).

What promise and command do you find in the verse above? How are they both connected to each other?

Until God makes everything right, the judges of ancient Israel must decide how to punish someone who injured or hurt another person. But first the judges needed information about what happened. The problem in Jesus’ day was that the teachers of the law used the law in Deuteronomy 32:35 in a way that allowed people to get even. When that happened, the law was used in the wrong way. Then the whole reason for the law was no longer understood. Worse, the teachers of the law used the law to allow things that the law really said were forbidden!

Read Matthew 6:4, 6; Matthew 16:27; Luke 6:23; and 2 Timothy 4:8. What do these verses tell us about how Jesus understood the rules about reward and punishment?

Jesus wasn’t against the rules of reward and punishment. Fair decisions are an important part of life. But no person should make himself a judge over another person, decide his guilt, and then punish him! We must not get even. If someone has done us wrong, we must let a judge in court decide what should be done.

Jesus then tells us to be as perfect as our Father in heaven, who is perfect. How can we be as perfect as God Himself? We must not be selfish, and we must love other people. In doing so, we show people God’s love. God teaches His followers to pray for the people who hurt and attack them. Being perfect, then, is to love, to be forgiving, and to be kind (Luke 6:36), even to people who are not good to you. When we follow this important rule, our hearts will be changed. Then we will show everyone God’s love.

What are some ways, day by day, that we can learn to love as God commands us to love? Why does this love always include our dying to self?



God teaches His followers to pray for the people who hurt and attack them.



Jesus shows us the road to heaven. He walked this same road for us.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Law Given to Israel,” pages 310–314, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

We live in the land of our enemy, Satan. So we may feel hurt in real life because of his evil plans and lies. Sad to say, pain and suffering are part of life now. But God helps us to stand strong in hard times.

“The precious Savior will send help just when we need it most. Jesus shows us the road to heaven. He walked this same road for us. Every pain that hurts us hurt Him first. Jesus carried before we did every heavy load we must carry. The Lord allows us to have troubles and hard times. Hard times get us ready for peace. The time of trouble will be a terrible time for God’s people. But during that time, we must look up. With faith, we will see the rainbow of promise that is around Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 633, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Many Christians, now and in the past, try to understand why the Lord chased the non-Jewish people out of their countries. Sometimes God destroyed them completely. Yes, these stories are hard to understand. But God’s love is fair. How should we trust that God’s love was shown in these stories about people who were forced to leave their countries if they didn’t obey God?
- ② Jesus tells us to “ ‘be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect’ ” (Matthew 5:48, NKJV). Why would Jesus say this command right after His commands to love our enemies and the people who hate us? What was Jesus telling us here about what it means to be “perfect” as our Father in heaven?
- ③ What does Paul mean when he says that “you are not under law. You now live under God’s grace [mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin]”? (Romans 6:14, ERV). How can we use God’s law in the wrong way?
- ④ Compare being fair with getting even. Are these two ideas completely different? Or are they two different ways of talking about the same idea? How do we know if our wish for a fair decision is not really a wish for revenge?

ALL THINGS WORKING TOGETHER

Carl Casey was a helicopter pilot and a science teacher in Fairbanks, Alaska. Many years before Carl became a Seventh-day Adventist, he stopped eating meats that weren't clean. Carl studied what the Bible said about the topic. He also saw that science supported Bible truth about meats that weren't clean. So, Carl stopped eating them. But Carl continued to eat clean meat. At the age of 51, Carl had a stroke.

The stroke almost destroyed Carl's life. He couldn't walk or work.

Then Carl read Romans 8:28, which says: "We know that in everything God works for the good of those [people] who love him. These are the people God chose, because that was his plan" (ERV). Carl read that verse many times in the past. But now the verse had new meaning for him. Carl saw that the Bible didn't say, "Only good things happen for those people who love God." The verse said, "in everything God works for the good of those [people] who love him."

Carl stopped feeling sad or angry that the stroke happened. He started to ask God to use his stroke to win people to Jesus in Alaska. Carl wanted to say as Joseph said to his brothers, " 'You decided to hurt me. But God caused a good thing to happen because of that. God brought me here to save the lives of many people. You can see how that has really happened!' " (Genesis 50:20, EASY).

Carl started to share Jesus in Alaska. Alaska is a hard place to share the Good News about Jesus. The winters are cold and long. The roads are limited. The territory is very big. Only about 3,000 Seventh-day Adventists live in Alaska. The number of people who live in Alaska is 733,000. Carl understood real fast that his wheelchair was a wonderful tool for witnessing. People noticed him right away. As soon as they did, Carl talked to them about his love for God.

People were surprised. They asked Carl, "You're in a wheelchair, and you care about God?"

Carl answered, "You betcha!" Then Carl talked about God's amazing love. He shared Romans 3:23, which says everyone has sinned and no one is as good as God. He also shared John 3:16, which says that everyone who believes in Jesus has everlasting life. Carl encouraged people to read the Bible daily and grow close to God. When we have a personal relationship with God, we will want to follow Bible truth. Then we will understand the reasons for keeping the Sabbath and eating a healthful diet.

Carl says, "I'm blessed to be alive. Most people die after a stroke this big." Ten years later, he can say that many lives have been changed. After his stroke, God used him to win people to Jesus. So, God really does work for the good of His people.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**People asked Carl,
"You're in a wheelchair and
you care about God?"**



Carl Casey

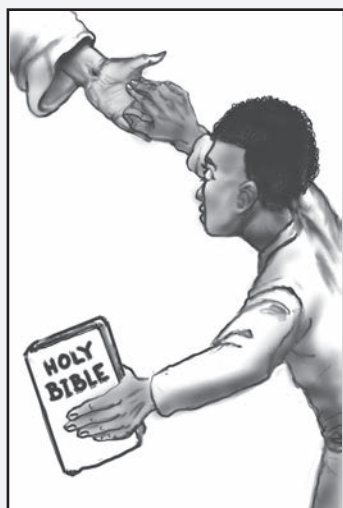
The Promise and the Building Plan



SABBATH—AUGUST 30

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 24:1–8; Exodus 24:9–18; Ezekiel 36:26–28; Exodus 25:1–9; Exodus 31:1–18.

MEMORY VERSE: “Moses told the people all the rules and commands from the Lord. Then all the people said, ‘We will obey all the commands that the Lord has spoken’ ” (Exodus 24:3, ERV).



We must keep looking to Jesus, not ourselves (Hebrews 12:1, 2). When we connect with Him, God can give us the strength to follow His teachings and obey Bible truth.

THE LORD was Israel's God and Savior. The Lord made them and gave them life. As their God, the Lord wanted to be with His people and to live among them. The Lord made us for close fellowship with Him. We know that strong relationships with other people take time and effort. The same is true with our relationship with God. Our relationship with God can be a growth-filled experience that makes us a better person. But we must spend time with Him. So how do we do that? We must study the Bible to learn what God wants to say to us. We must pray. When we pray, we open our hearts to God. We must share with other people the Good News that Jesus saves us from our sins. As God blesses us, we will bring blessings into the lives of other people.

We must keep looking to Jesus, not ourselves (Hebrews 12:1, 2). When we connect with Him, God can give us the strength to follow His teachings and obey Bible truth. End-time Christians will keep the commandments of God and have “the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12, NKJV).

So, what we must do is simple, really: we love God. Because we love Him, we obey Him.

THE BOOK AND THE BLOOD (Exodus 24:1–8)

God made a Promise with His people. To show the people that God accepted the Promise, Moses did two things: (1) he read from the book of God's Promise, and (2) he splashed some of the blood on the people. Why are these two things so important? How do they help show the special relationship that God wants with His people? Read Exodus 24:1–8 for the answers.

The living God of the Bible is the God of relationships. God cares more about people than anything else. So, God pays close attention to people. The reason for the things that God does is so that He can build a personal relationship with us. God is love. So, He must care about relationships, right? How can there be love without relationships?

Jesus said, “ ‘I will be lifted up [nailed to a cross and lifted up to die] from the earth. When that happens, I will draw [lead] all people to myself’ ” (John 12:32, ERV). God wants us to have good behavior, the correct teachings, and right actions. Above all these things, God wants us to have a personal and close relationship with Him. We can see this important Bible truth in the two things God gave us when He made the earth and skies in a week: God gave us the Sabbath and marriage (Genesis 1–2). The Sabbath is about our spiritual relationship with God. Marriage is about our relationship with our husband or wife. So, both the Sabbath and marriage are really about relationships.

God agreed to the Promise and accepted it at Sinai to show His people the special relationship that He wanted with them. The people shouted two times that they would obey God: “ ‘We will do everything that the Lord has said. We will obey’ ” (Exodus 24:7, ICB). The people meant what they said. But they didn't know that they were weak and broken. So, they had no strength to obey. But Moses did something to give them hope. Moses splashed some of the blood on the people. The blood showed that Israel could obey God, but only with Jesus' help.

We don't want to accept that we are weak and broken sinners. We want to do evil. To do good, we must have help from outside ourselves. This help comes only from God, His mercy, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. Even with all this help, we want to do evil so easily, right?

That's why a close personal relationship with God was as important to the people at Sinai as it is to us today.



Moses splashed some of the blood on the people. The blood showed that Israel could obey God, but only with Jesus' help.

SEEING GOD (Exodus 24:9–18)

Read Exodus 24:9–18. What amazing experience did God give the Israelites here?



When Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper, they also make a close connection with other Christians, who are sinners the same as they are.

After God accepted the Promise with His people, Moses again climbed Sinai. At the start of this climb, Moses wasn't alone. He had the company of 73 Israelite leaders. The leaders had an amazing experience: they saw God. The leaders ate together. The meal showed that they accepted God's Promise. The meal was a special feast or banquet. The God of Israel was their Host. God deeply honored these leaders when He invited them to the banquet.

In the Middle East during Bible times, eating together was an important experience and a big honor. People who ate together offered each other the gifts of forgiveness and friendship. People who ate together were there for each other and stayed together in hard times. When people ate together, they made a promise without words. They promised that if something should happen later to any one of them, they would come and help. So, to be invited to a meal was a special honor that wasn't given to everyone.

What if a guest said no to a dinner invitation? Then he insulted the host of the dinner. To reject an invitation was one of the worst insults in Bible times. This information helps us understand the New Testament stories about Jesus who ate with sinners. The Jewish leaders scolded Jesus for eating with them (Luke 5:30). When Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper, they also make a close connection with other Christians, who are sinners the same as they are. During the Lord's Supper, we celebrate the forgiveness Jesus gives us. We celebrate His saving mercy (read Matthew 26:26–30; Mark 14:22–25; 1 Corinthians 11:23–29).

Some of the men who went up the mountain with Moses later fell into sin and lost their lives (read Leviticus 10:1, 2, 9). Yes, these men had a deep experience with God on the mountain and at the feast. But their lives weren't changed for the better because of that experience. This story teaches us a powerful lesson. Just because we have Bible truth doesn't mean we are saved.

Think more about what happened to these men. Now think about how God has honored our church with so much Bible truth. What warning should this sad story give to us as Adventists?

POWER TO OBEY (Ezekiel 36:26–28)

How do we become obedient? Read Ezekiel 36:26–28 for the answer.

Three times, the Israelites announce that they will obey God (Exodus 19:8; Exodus 24:3, 7). Obedience is important, even if we are weak, broken sinners, as the Bible teaches.

So how, then, can we obey God?

The good news is that when God commands us to do something, He gives us the power to do it. The help that is not inside of us comes from outside us and gives us strength to do everything God asks. God does the work in us. The prophet Ezekiel, God's special messenger, says that only God can change our hearts (Ezekiel 36:26, 27). As Joshua told God's people: " 'You will not be able to serve the Lord well enough' " (Joshua 24:19, ICB). So, we must allow God to remove our stubborn heart of stone and replace it with a tender heart of flesh. This new heart is loving and gentle and can obey Him.

But first, we must decide to follow God. We must choose with our free will to give ourselves to God every moment of our lives. We don't have the power to serve Him without His help. But when we give our weakness to God, He will make us strong. As Paul says, "When I am weak, then I am truly [really] strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10, ICB).

Now let's look at Ezekiel 36 again, this time at verses 24–30. Do you see all the work that God does? God gathers, cleans, removes, gives, puts, and moves you to carefully keep His law. What God is doing, you will do. God understands you. If you stay close to Him in your heart, His actions will become yours. Then you and God will become so alike that all your thoughts, feelings, behavior, and actions will come from Him. The agreement between God and you will be powerful and full of life and energy.

In Ezekiel 36:27, the Lord says, " 'I will put my Spirit inside you and change you so that you will obey my laws. You will carefully obey my commands' " (ERV). Again, do you see how God does the work? God commands people to obey Him and then gives them the power to obey. God always helps His people to do what He asks. Obedience is God's gift to us, the same as His forgiveness and saving mercy are (Philippians 2:13).



We must allow God to remove our stubborn heart of stone and replace it with a tender heart of flesh. This new heart is loving and gentle and can obey Him.

AMONG HIS PEOPLE (Exodus 25:1–9)



The Holy Tent was the place where God planned to make Himself known to His people.

God used many different things to teach His people Bible truth. One of the things God used was the Holy Tent. The work done in the Holy Tent taught the Israelites about Jesus and His plan to save them. Jesus would come hundreds of years later and do everything the Holy Tent showed He would do.

Read Exodus 25:1–9. What important Bible truths do you see in these verses?

God led His people out of Egypt and was already close to them in His heart. But He wanted Moses to build Him a Holy Tent for a special reason: “ ‘The people must build a holy place for me. Then I can live among them’ ” (Exodus 25:8, ICB). God wanted to show His people that He was really among them. Yes, the people sinned many times. But God never gave up on His people. “After the people confessed their sins, God forgave them and accepted them again.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 343. Then God gave the people the command to build Him a special place to live among them.

The Bible tells us that God made the skies and the earth and doesn't live in man-made temples and buildings: “ ‘But the Most High God does not live in houses built by [with] human hands. This is what the prophet [special messenger] writes: ‘The Lord says, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is where I rest my feet. So do you think you can build a house for me?’ ” (Acts 7:47–50, ERV; also read Acts 17:24). Also, King Solomon says: “ ‘But, God, can you really live here on the earth? Even the sky and the highest place in heaven cannot contain you. Certainly this house which I have built cannot contain you either [also]’ ” (1 Kings 8:27, ICB). The Holy Tent was the place where God planned to make Himself known to His people.

The Israelites brought free-will offerings to Moses to build the Holy Tent. The people brought precious and expensive gifts, including gold, silver, brass, wood, fine cloth, olive oil, and spices. In Exodus 25:10–27:21, Moses gives us much information about the Holy Tent. God gave Moses a building plan with important information about how to build and furnish the Holy Tent. Moses had to follow God's plan exactly (Exodus 25:9, 40; Exodus 26:30). The Holy Tent on earth was an exact copy of the temple in heaven (Hebrews 8:1, 2; Hebrews 9:11).

FILLED WITH GOD'S SPIRIT (Exodus 31:1–18)

God told Moses what His people needed to do to get ready to worship Him. Priests or spiritual leaders must wear special clothes. The high priest or top spiritual leader wore a special piece of clothing named an ephod. The ephod contained the names of the sons of Israel. The high priest also wore a special chest covering over his heart (Exodus 28). All the priests must be given to God to serve Him in His holy work. God also told Moses how to carefully get other things ready that would be used in worshiping Him: the altar for burning sweet-smelling perfume, the bowl for washing, and the holy oil (Exodus 30).

Read Exodus 31:1–18. What special help did God give Moses so that all the Holy Tent's furniture and objects would be made and built in a beautiful and correct way?

For the first time in the Bible, we read that God will fill a person with His Spirit. What does that mean? God gave Bezalel power to work on the Holy Tent. God filled Bezalel with knowledge. God gave Bezalel the skills and the know-how needed to do the work. Also, God gave Aholiab and many other skilled workers the same Spirit to help in this work.

During this time, God also announces that His Sabbath is an agreement between Him and His people. The Sabbath shows that He makes them holy. Later, the Lord shares this same idea with Ezekiel: “I also gave them my Sabbaths. They were to be a sign between us. Then they would know that I am the Lord. I make them holy” (Ezekiel 20:12, ICB).

The Sabbath helps us remember that the Lord made us (Genesis 2:2, 3) and saves us. He is our God (Deuteronomy 5:15; Mark 2:27, 28). Our God is holy. He changes people for the better. His Holy Spirit and Bible truth cause people to become loving, kind, unselfish, and forgiving.

The most precious gift God gave to Moses was the Ten Commandments (Exodus 31:18). God wrote the law on two pieces of stone and gave them to Moses (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:9–11). These two pieces of stone were put inside the holy box in the Most Holy Room of the Holy Tent. Another name for the holy box was the ark of the Promise. A lid sat on top of the holy box (Exodus 25:21). Another name for this lid was the mercy cover or mercy seat.



The two pieces of stone were put inside the holy box in the Most Holy Room of the Holy Tent.



Every animal offering showed the death of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, and God's final work to remove all sin from heaven and earth.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, "The Tabernacle and Its Services," pages 343–353, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

The Holy Tent was a special place where God forgave His people and made them clean from all their sins. The Holy Tent showed God's whole plan to save people. God showed this plan to His people in the desert. The Holy Tent taught the Israelites about forgiveness, being made holy, and God's work as Judge. Every animal offering showed the death of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, and God's final work to remove all sin from heaven and earth. The Holy Tent also contained God's law. His law shows us how to be holy.

"The law of God was put inside the holy box or ark of the Promise. God's law was both holy and fair. His law said that the sinner must die. But above the law was the cover or mercy seat. God appeared above the mercy seat. He gave pardon to the sinner who confessed his sins. The Holy Tent and all its offerings showed the work that Jesus did to save us. In Jesus' work, 'God's truth and faithful love join together. His peace and holiness [being holy] kiss each other.' Psalm 85:10 [NIRV]."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 349, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ How many times did you say, "I will do everything the Lord tells me to do"? How much success did you have?
- ❷ The Sabbath was a sign between God and His people that the Lord would make them holy. How are being holy and obedient connected with Sabbath keeping?
- ❸ The Holy Tent showed God's saving plan in symbols. What do these symbols tell us about why we must depend completely on God to save us?
- ❹ The top religious leader or high priest brought the blood of an animal offering into the Most Holy Room of the Holy Tent on one day each year. This blood was a word picture for the people's sins. How does this amazing Bible truth show us what Jesus did on the cross for us? How does the blood show what He does for us now in heaven?

KNOWING AN ALL-GOD

Iqbal didn't know anything about Jesus when he traveled more 600 miles to go to a Seventh-day Adventist school in southern Asia.

Iqbal grew up in a non-Christian family. His parents sent him at the age of 20 to join his sister at the school. Iqbal was studying there and doing well in his English classes.

Iqbal went to every morning and evening worship program at the school. Iqbal wanted to know Jesus with all his heart. He read the Bible to learn more about Him. Soon he read Jeremiah 1:5: " 'Before I made you in your mother's womb [body], I knew you. Before you were born, I chose you for a special work. I chose you to be a prophet [special messenger] to the nations [people from different countries]' " (ERV).

Iqbal thought, "I want to know Jesus because He knew me before He made me in my mother's body."

Weeks passed, then months. Iqbal continued to learn more about Jesus. Iqbal thought, "Could it be that Jesus brought me more than 600 miles from my home to learn English and about Jesus' love?"

Iqbal started to know Jesus' love in his own life. Then 2 1/2 years after arriving at the school, he decided to give his heart to Jesus. Iqbal got baptized.

After Iqbal finished school, he went to college. Iqbal studied computer science at Lowry Adventist College in Bengaluru, India. He got a job on campus after he finished college. Jesus is his whole life.

Iqbal says, "Now, I'm happy to live with Jesus. Day by day, Jesus leads me. He takes care of me. Whenever I have a problem, I go to Jesus. He helps me solve all of my problems."

Iqbal is amazed that Jesus knows everything. Jesus knew him before he was in his mother's belly. Jesus also knows everything that Iqbal needs before Iqbal knows what those things are!

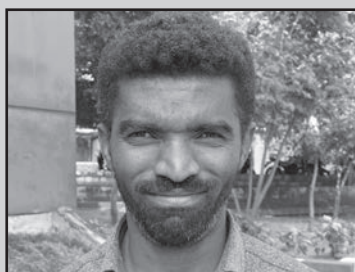
Iqbal says, "I thank Jesus for taking care of my needs long before I know about them. Before I ask, He knows what to give and the best way to give it to me. That's why I trust in Jesus and love Him more each day."

Lowry Adventist College got part of a 13th Sabbath Offering in 2024 to open an English language church. Thank you for your offerings this quarter that support important programs in our worldwide church.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**"Before I made you
in your mother's womb
[body], I knew you. Before
you were born, I chose you
for a special work."**



Iqbal Husensab

Praying for People Who Reject God



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 6

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 32:1–6; Romans 1:22–27; Exodus 32:7, 8; Exodus 32:9–29; Exodus 32:30–32.

MEMORY VERSE: “So Moses went back to the LORD and said, ‘Please listen! These people committed [did] a terrible sin and made a god from gold. Now, forgive them of this sin. If you will not forgive them, then erase my name from your book’ ” (Exodus 32:31, 32, ERV).



God's people turned away from Him and worshiped a man-made statue of a god, the gold cow.

MOSES was in the mountain with God for only 40 days, and what happened? God's people turned away from Him and worshiped a man-made statue of a god, the gold cow. After God gave His people so many mighty signs, experiences, and miracles, how could they do that?

Did the people not understand who God really was? Or did their love for sin cause them to forget their powerful experiences with God? Weren't the Israelites grateful for everything God did for them? Or did they not really care? Did they not fully understand what God did for them? Were their minds ruined with their sins and the old way of thinking from the past? Were they not grateful for God's gift of mercy? Did they so quickly forget the mighty acts of God (Psalm 106:13, 21–23)? Or should we blame their worship of the gold cow on Aaron's failed leadership? Moses tells us that the Lord “ ‘was so angry with Aaron he wanted to destroy him too’ ” (Deuteronomy 9:20, NIV).

Whatever Israel's reasons for sinning against God and turning from Him, what lessons about sin and God's mercy can we learn from their experience?

FAILED LEADERSHIP (Exodus 32:1–6)

God invited Moses to spend time with Him. 40 days and 40 nights may have seemed a short period of time for Moses. But 40 days and 40 nights was too long for the Israelites. Their visible leader, Moses, was gone too long. The people became confused and refused to wait for Moses. They felt afraid and insecure. The people wanted a visible god who would lead them, much the same as the “gods” they saw all their lives in Egypt.

Read Exodus 32:1–6. How was it possible for Aaron’s leadership to fail in a big spectacular way?

Aaron failed to do what was right. Aaron didn’t trust the Lord. He did what the people wanted. The people asked for something forbidden and terrible: “ ‘Come. Make us a god that will lead us’ ” (Exodus 32:1, NIV).

People gave gold to make the statue. Aaron didn’t stop them from giving. Worse, Aaron invited them to give! Then Aaron helped to make the false god. After Aaron made the gold calf, they announced, “ ‘Israel, here is your god who brought you up out of Egypt’ ” (Exodus 32:4, NIV). The people were evil, filled with sin, and short-sighted. They made this statue and then announced that this “god” saved them from the Egyptians. Isn’t it strange how sin can change our thinking and actions for the worse? People celebrate and worship the things they make. When they do, their hearts and minds become ruined.

“The people of Israel needed a strong leader during this time. This leader needed to put the honor of God above popular favor, personal safety, or his own life. But Aaron was not a strong leader. Aaron tried to stop the people, but He was afraid of them. Aaron was weak when he needed to be strong at an important time. Aaron’s weakness caused the people to want to make the gold calf even more. The noise and trouble grew worse. The crowd grew excited. Even so, some Israelites stayed loyal and true to God’s Promise. But most of the people joined in the sin. Aaron was afraid for his own safety. But he didn’t stand up for God’s honor. He gave the people what they wanted.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 316, 317, adapted.

Why was Aaron, a leader, so weak? What excuse do you think Aaron gave in his own heart for his actions?



Aaron helped to make the false god.

EVIL AND WORSHIPING FALSE GODS (Romans 1:22–27)

Where did the worship of false gods quickly lead the Israelites? Read Exodus 32:6 for the answer.

The gold cow looked much the same as the Egyptian bull-god named Apis or the Egyptian cow-god named Hathor. When Israel made the gold cow, they broke the first and second commandments. God must punish this sin because the people openly broke their relationship with the living Lord. The Israelites worshiped something they made and not the God who made them. Their god could not see, hear, smell, speak, care, love, or lead.

God made people to be copies of Himself. But now the people made a god that looked the same as an animal. Why did they want to serve this animal as a god? So, the people sinned deeply against the Lord (Isaiah 31:7; Isaiah 42:17).

In what ways does the sin with the gold cow show us what is written in Romans 1:22–27?



**Some people bow down
in front of statues.
Other people worship
false gods in their hearts.**

When people worship false gods, they reject the Bible truth that God is God and man is man. Worshiping false gods breaks the connection between God and man and separates us from Him. Some people bow down in front of statues. Other people worship false gods in their hearts. All types of this worship will break our relationship with the Lord and lower us into sin. No wonder the verse talks about what the people did the next day. First, they killed animals and offered them as gifts to the statue of the gold cow. Then the people started to party and have a good time. Ellen G. White says that the party was “much the same as the feasts in Egypt that people celebrated in honor of false gods.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 320, adapted.

People are very good at making their own false gods. Worse, after they make their own gods, they bow down and serve them. These people replace the Savior who made them with things that, sooner or later, destroy them.

What are ways, today, that people worship nature and the things that God made, and not God?

A TERRIBLE SIN (EXODUS 32:7, 8)

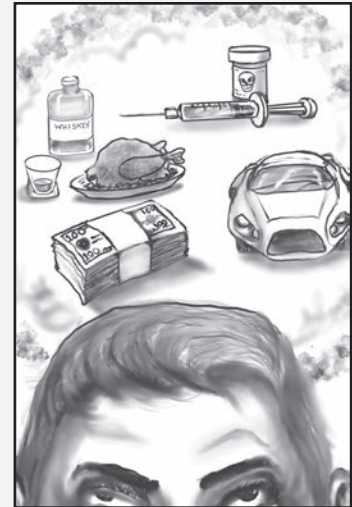
**Why did God send Moses back to the camp of Israel?
Read Exodus 32:7, 8 for the answer.**

The Israelites worshiped a false god. When they did, they started to “divorce” God. “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go down from this mountain. Your people, the people you brought out of the land of Egypt, have done a terrible sin’ ” (Exodus 32:7, ICB). The people made their sin worse when they thanked their “god” for helping them escape Egypt. The people went against what God said to them (read Exodus 20:2)! The people rejected God and His mighty acts. The Israelites’ hearts and minds were completely ruined.

For Ezekiel, the worship of false gods caused God’s people to suffer and to do other sins (read Ezekiel 8:1–18; Ezekiel 20:1–44; Ezekiel 22:1–12). We may wonder, how could God’s people be so foolish? Why did they refuse to stop worshiping false gods? We are sure that we would not do the same thing. Are we really free of false gods? Today, false gods may look different. But they have the same power over us that false gods had over God’s people in Bible times.

A false god replaces God. We know that worshiping the false god isn’t right. But we worship it anyway. The false god steals our time, our thoughts and imagination, our hearts, and our feelings away from God. We spend more time with the god than we do with God. The false god can make us slaves. We become what we look at and watch. So, we will become no better than whatever “god” we serve.

If God isn’t the most important part of our lives, then other gods will replace Him. If we don’t enjoy being with God and communicating with Him, we will enjoy and give our lives to something or someone else. What we substitute for Jesus may look different for each of us: pride, a selfish heart, money, power, sex, food, TV, a bad drug habit, alcohol, dirty thoughts, pleasures, work, sports, family, video games, shopping, sex tapes, films and movies, ideas, government, fame, good grades, and so on. We can even turn anything good and beautiful into a false god. Worshiping false gods puts us in terrible danger because false gods change our personality, our thinking, our feelings, and our choice of friends. False gods change who we are. False gods destroy our real, personal relationships and replace them with empty friendships that, in the end, can’t save us.



**What we substitute
for Jesus may look
different for each of us:
pride, a selfish heart,
money, power, sex, food,
TV, a bad drug habit,
alcohol, dirty thoughts,
pleasures, work, sports,
family, video games, shop-
ping, sex tapes, films and
movies, ideas, government,
fame, good grades, and so
on.**

GOD'S HOLY ANGER (Exodus 32:9–29)

What did Moses say and do when God wanted to destroy Israel? Read Exodus 32:9–29 for the answer.

While Moses was on Sinai, God said that He would destroy the people who turned against Him. Then God would make Moses' future children into a powerful people group. But Moses didn't want God to do that. Moses asked the Lord to remember that the Israelites weren't his people, but God's. Moses didn't bring the people out of Egypt. God brought them out with His mighty works. So, Moses asked God to remember His early promises to their fathers. Moses was working as a real helper. He asked God to forgive His people. Moses stood between God's anger and the people.

"Then the LORD took pity on his people. He didn't destroy them as he had said he would" (Exodus 32:14, NIV). After that, Moses went back to the camp.

When Moses came near the camp, he saw the gold cow. Moses saw the people dancing. He became very angry, and he threw the two pieces of stone on the ground. The stones broke into several pieces at the bottom of the mountain (Exodus 32:19). God wrote His law on the two pieces of stone. The broken pieces of stone were a symbol that showed that Israel broke God's law. God scolded Moses for breaking the stone. Later, God commanded Moses to cut two more pieces of stone to replace the broken stones: " 'I will write on the tablets the same words that were on the first tablets, which you broke' " (Deuteronomy 10:2, ICB).

Moses angrily scolded Aaron for doing what the people wanted. "Moses said to Aaron, 'What did these people do to you that would make you do this [make a gold cow]? Why did you lead them to do such [the same as this] a terrible sin?' " (Exodus 32:21, ERV). What made things worse was that God honored Aaron so much in the past. Aaron went on the mountain with Moses and the 70 leaders (Exodus 24:1).

Aaron said that a miracle caused the gold cow to appear in the fire and then jump out of the flames. Aaron tried to use this story to trick his brother. (Do you see how one sin leads to another? In this example, worshiping false gods leads to lying.) Moses wasn't fooled. He saw that the people behaved wildly. Moses could see the evil behavior that happened when the people worshiped the gold cow. So, Moses knew that he needed to stop their sinning right away.



Moses saw the people dancing. He became very angry, and he threw the two pieces of stone on the ground.

NO MORE TEARS OR PAIN (Exodus 32:30–32)

How far did Moses go in his prayer for sinners? Read Exodus 32:30–32 for the answer.

Because Israel worshiped the gold cow, terrible things happened in their camp. Many people died (Exodus 32:28). “The next day Moses said to the people, ‘You have committed [done] a terrible sin. But now I will go up to the LORD. Maybe if I pray to him, he will forgive your sin’ ” (Exodus 32:30, NIV). “So Moses went back to the LORD and said, ‘Please listen! These people committed a terrible sin and made a god from gold. Now, forgive them of [for] this sin. If you will not forgive them, then erase my name from your book’ ” (Exodus 32:31, 32, ERV).

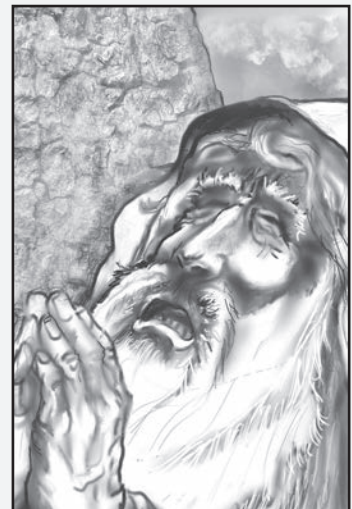
Moses is a symbol for Jesus. Moses prays for sinners and is willing to die for them. These things show us what Jesus would do for all of us. Moses felt so much love in his heart for sinners. Moses showed his loyalty to the Lord and His love for people. The book of Exodus doesn’t say how long Moses stayed with the Lord on the mountain this time. But the book of Deuteronomy tells us that Moses was on Sinai this time for 40 days (read Deuteronomy 9:18).

In Exodus 32:32, the word written as “forgive” is from a word in the Hebrew language whose basic meaning is “to take on” or “to carry.” We see an example of this meaning in Isaiah 53:4, which talks about Jesus: “For sure He took on Himself our troubles and carried our sorrows” (NIV). This same word is translated as “forgive” in Exodus 32:32 and “to take on” in Isaiah 53:4. This meaning helps us understand forgiveness and what it cost God to save us.

Moses asked the Lord to “carry” the people’s sin. That is exactly what Jesus did at the cross, thousands of years later. Exodus 32:32 shows not only the idea of a Substitute accepting the punishment for our sin. The verse also shows that the Substitute is God Himself.

Exodus 32:32 shows us how we get forgiveness. God in Jesus carried our sins. That’s the only way He could forgive us. This Bible truth is a powerful picture of God’s plan to save us and shows us how much it cost God to do it.

Moses asks God Himself to carry His people’s sins. Jesus did just that. How do we understand this powerful Bible truth? What does it tell us about God’s love?

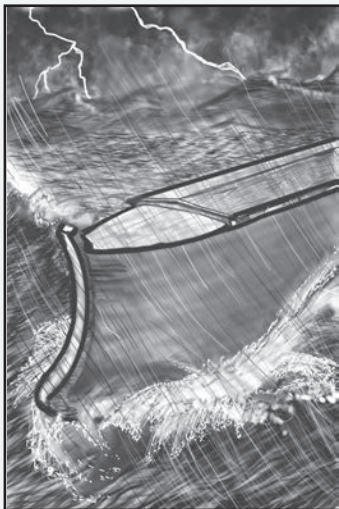


Moses prays for sinners and is willing to die for them. These things show us what Jesus would do for all of us.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Idolatry at Sinai,” pages 315–327, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

This week’s lesson is about God’s work in Christians. “With God’s power working in us, he can do much, much more than anything we can ask or think of” (Ephesian 3:20, ERV). We should not live for ourselves or do what we want, because that causes us to worship self and not God. Our attention should be on God and His power. He gives us His strength, which leads us to a new life. The Lord gives us power over sin (Philippians 4:13; Jude 1:24, 25).

“Because God is fair, He must punish evil. But God must punish evil because He is a loving God, too. God is not just the Leader of His people. He also protects them. God punishes sinners who refuse to stop fighting against Him so that they don’t destroy the lives of other people, too. When God spared Cain’s life and let him live, God showed to everyone in heaven what would happen if sin didn’t get punished. Cain’s life and teachings caused his future children to become so evil that the only way God could save the earth was to destroy it with a worldwide Flood. . . . The longer men lived, the more evil they became. The same thing happened at Sinai. If God didn’t punish the sinners fast, the same thing that happened with the people who lived before the Flood would have happened with the Israelites.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 325, adapted.



“Cain’s life and teachings caused his future children to become so evil that the only way God could save the earth was to destroy it with a worldwide Flood.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Think more about the question at the end of Monday’s study. What are ways that we can worship nature and not the God who made nature? How can we be good managers of this earth and protect nature without worshipping it or making it a false god?
- ❷ Why did Moses order the killing of the people who refused to be sorry for their sin and continued to fight against God and His teaching?
- ❸ Read 1 Peter 2:24. How does this verse show the powerful idea that Jesus is our Substitute? Why must we have a Substitute to save us from our sins? Why is any teaching about how we are saved from sin wrong if it doesn’t teach this idea of a Substitute?

FILLED WITH GOD'S LOVE

16-year-old Domenico didn't want to lose Fulvia after he met her in Florence, Italy. So, he lied when she asked about his parents.

Fulvia asked Domenico, "What do your parents do?"

Domenico said, "My parents are rich. They own a beautiful car."

Then Fulvia asked Domenico where he lived. Without thinking, he gave her the address of the orphanage where he lived.

But when Fulvia went to the address, she found the orphanage. So, Domenico couldn't lie anymore.

He said, "I'm an orphan. I live here."

Fulvia told her father everything. Domenico thought their relationship was over. But her father's answer surprised Domenico.

Fulvia's father said, "We have three children. Invite Domenico over. Then we'll have four kids."

Fulvia's family accepted Domenico the same as a son. Domenico visited their home often. The family made Domenico feel very loved. Domenico learned about God's love for the first time. Domenico heard about God before. But now he saw God's love in real life. Domenico wanted to know God. He started to pray.

Years passed. Domenico left the orphanage. He married Fulvia when he was 22. Domenico continued to want to know God. Domenico watched the 1956 American movie *The Ten Commandments* while he was in the orphanage. He wondered if there was a church that kept all ten commandments. He wondered if anyone lived the way the Bible talks about.

When Domenico was 30, he heard someone on the radio say, "Now we're going to talk about Paul the Teacher and Preacher." Domenico listened. He noticed the radio show host said things about the Bible that no other Christians said. Domenico started to listen to the radio station often. When a radio show host talked about Ellen G. White's book *Steps to Christ*, he called the radio station to ask for a copy. Domenico also asked if the station would send someone to his house to answer his questions.

Emmanuel and his wife showed up at Domenico's house with the book. Emmanuel opened the Bible to answer Domenico's questions. Then Domenico asked him to tell him about the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Domenico wanted to know more about the history of Christianity. So, then he read *The Great Controversy*.

After seven months of Bible studies, Domenico felt God's love fill his heart. He got baptized. Now 68, Domenico Civardi says, "I'm grateful to Adventist radio because it changed my life."

INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



The family made Domenico feel very loved.



Domenico Civardi

“Please Show Me Your Glory”



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 13

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Exodus 33:7–11; Exodus 33:12–17; Exodus 33:18–23; Exodus 34:1–28; Exodus 34:29–35.



We will be students always who are forever learning.

MEMORY VERSE: “The Lord passed in front of Moses and said, ‘I am the Lord. The Lord is a God who shows mercy and is kind. The Lord doesn’t become angry quickly. The Lord has great [powerful and deep] love and faithfulness [can be trusted]. The Lord is kind to thousands of people. The Lord forgives people for wrong and sin and turning against him. But the Lord does not forget to punish guilty people. The Lord will punish not only the guilty people. He will also punish their children, their grandchildren, their great-grandchildren and their great-great-grandchildren’ ” (Exodus 34:6, 7, ICB).

WE ALL NEED TO GROW in our walk with God. Without growth, we are dead. Peter says: “Grow in the grace [mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin] and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Glory [praise and honor] belongs to him both now and forever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18, NIV). We need to be willing to grow. We are daily in God’s university. We will never graduate. We will be students always who are forever learning. As you grow, you can be perfect in each part of your life if you allow God to help you become the person that He meant you to be in Jesus.

This week we will study about how Moses knew and followed God’s commands. Because Moses did these things, he grew in his walk with the Lord.

THE MEETING TENT (Exodus 33:7–11)

**Why did God ask Moses to build the Meeting Tent?
Read Exodus 33:7–11.**

We must not confuse the Meeting Tent with the Holy Tent. The Israelites built the Meeting Tent outside their camp. Then they built the Holy Tent in the center of the camp. Another name for the Holy Tent in the desert was the tabernacle. We don't know how often Moses talked with God in the Meeting Tent. We do know one thing for sure: Moses' meetings with God caused a close friendship between them. "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks with his friend" (Exodus 33:11, ICB). A friend is someone who can give us good advice. We can discuss most everything with a friend and trust that he won't share our secrets with other people. A friend is a nice thing to have and a nice thing to be.

In Exodus 19–34, the story of Moses teaches us how God changes our lives. How did God build a relationship with Moses, who was an outstanding leader? If we study the life of Moses, we will see how he grew in his knowledge about God's power and love. Spiritual growth is an important part of our relationship with God.

Before Moses arrived at Sinai, God used him in a mighty way. God helped Moses get ready for his special job as Israel's leader. In the land of Midian, Moses took care of sheep. During his time there, God helped Moses to write two books: Job and Genesis. Then, at the burning bush, God told Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. Moses saw God defeat the Egyptian gods and the mighty Egyptian army in the Red Sea. Moses saw for many weeks how God led Israel from Egypt to Sinai. God gave His law to Moses on the mountain. This experience caused Moses' face to shine. Then Moses led Israel for another 39 years to the border of the Promised Land. The Bible tells us that Moses was a loyal servant of God (Deuteronomy 34:5; Joshua 1:1). Moses was God's special messenger who was the same as a light in the dark (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18). Moses encouraged God's people to change for the better, even if the people didn't always obey him. When the people did obey, they enjoyed success.

We may learn much from Moses. His life story shows us what God can do when we let Him change us. What wonderful things happened in your life when you let God change you?



Moses was God's special messenger who was the same as a light in the dark (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18).

SO THAT I MAY KNOW YOU (Exodus 33:12–17)

What did Moses ask the Lord to teach him? Why did Moses want God to lead them in a visible way? Read Exodus 33:12–17 for the answers.



Moses approached the thick, dark cloud that hid God (Exodus 20:21).

Moses' spiritual growth continued. He became close to the Lord and wished to be the same as God in his heart. When Moses talked with God in the Meeting Tent, Moses understood that he didn't know God. So, Moses prayed, " 'If you are pleased with me, teach me more about yourself. Then I can know you' " (Exodus 33:13, NIV). Moses understood his deep need to understand God better. Moses learned that the more he learned about the Lord, the less he really knew Him. Moses saw his need and wished with his whole heart to know the Lord in a new way. God gave Moses what he wanted.

As we look at Moses' spiritual experiences so far, we see how the Lord led Moses into a deeper relationship with Him. This relationship helped Moses grow strong.

First, Moses climbed the mountain and "went up to God" (Exodus 19:3, NKJV). Next, Moses went "to the top of the mountain" (Exodus 19:20, NKJV). Later, Moses approached the thick, dark cloud that hid God (Exodus 20:21).

Another time, "Moses entered the cloud" where God was and stayed with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights (Exodus 24:18, NIV). During these 40 days, God gave Moses two precious gifts. (1) God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. God wrote them on two pieces of stone, which He cut from the mountain Himself (Exodus 24:12). (2) God gave Moses a special building plan to build and furnish the Holy Tent (read Exodus 25–31).

Then Moses spent another 40 days and nights with the Lord. Moses asked God to have mercy on His people, who sinned against Him (Exodus 32:30–32; Deuteronomy 9:18).

Even after all these powerful experiences, Moses wanted to know more about God. So, God soon gave Moses special lessons to understand Him better. Moses wanted more than information about God. Moses wanted a deeper experience and relationship with God.

No wonder Jesus would say later: " 'And this is eternal [everlasting] life: that people can know you, the only true God, and that they can know Jesus Christ, the one you sent' " (John 17:3, ERV). What was the best way for God to help humans know Him better? He became one of us.

PLEASE SHOW ME YOUR GLORY (Exodus 33:18–23)

After Israel worshiped the gold cow, Moses asked God to show mercy to His people. Moses wanted to be sure that the Lord would continue to lead Israel to the Promised Land. Deep down in his heart, Moses wanted to know the Lord better, too.

**How did God answer Moses' wish to see His glory?
Read Exodus 33:18–23 for the answer.**

Moses asked the Lord, “Please show me your Glory [shining might]” (Exodus 33:18, ERV). Yes, God showed Moses His glory. But when God answered, do you see how He also promised to show Moses His “love and mercy” (verse 19, ERV)? So, what does this information tell us? We can safely say that God’s glory is His love and mercy (read Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 576; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 414, 415; *Prophets and Kings*, page 313).

“God is praised and honored when His children accept His love and mercy. God wants to see men and women become everything that He plans for them to be.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 530, adapted. God is praised and honored when sinners stop doing evil and come back to Him (read *Prophets and Kings*, page 668). God gives sinners everything they need to change for the better. At the same time, we give God glory, honor, and praise when we show His love and mercy in our own lives and to other people.

We must show God’s love and forgiveness in our behavior and actions. Then we will be a blessing to other people. We also will be a shining light to people on other planets who are watching what is happening in the war between God and Satan on this earth. As Paul says, “I think that God has made a show of us missionaries [Christian workers who share with other people the Good News about Jesus]. We are the last and the least among men. We are like [the same as] men waiting to be put to death [killed]. The whole world [everyone on earth], men and angels alike, are watching us” (1 Corinthians 4:9, NLV). Wow! Angels and people on other planets are watching us. This idea gives a powerful meaning to our lives that we can hardly begin to understand!

In Romans 2:4, Paul says that “God is kind. He is trying to get you to be sorry for your sins and turn from [stop doing] them” (NLV). God’s love convinces people that they are sinners who need to be saved.



**We will be a shining light
to people on other planets
who are watching
what is happening
in the war between God
and Satan on this earth.**

GOD SHOWS MOSES HIS GLORY (Exodus 34:1–28)

How did God show His glory to Moses? Read Exodus 34:1–28 for the answer.

Moses started his climb early in the morning. He needed to take with him two pieces of stone, the same as the first ones, which he broke (Exodus 32:19). Moses went to meet with the Lord on Sinai for the 7th time. Moses climbed the mountain six other times in the past: (1) Exodus 19:3, 7; (2) Exodus 19:8, 14; (3) Exodus 19:20, 25; (4) Exodus 20:21; Exodus 24:3; (5) Exodus 24:9, 12–18; Exodus 32:15; and (6) Exodus 32:30, 31.

Moses was now ready to see the beauty of God's glory. God's beauty is best shown in His amazing announcement of Himself. This announcement is the most important explanation of who God is. We see this same idea all through the Bible (Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 103:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). The Lord's announcement in Exodus 34:1–28 is the John 3:16 of the Old Testament. The Bible writers often talk about God's glory. This idea helps us have a correct understanding of God's love and forgiveness.

When God gave Moses the explanation of His name, Moses bowed down and worshiped the Lord. When we see God's love, mercy, and forgiveness, we will want to come to Jesus. When we see His love, we start to love Him. This love leads us to serve and obey Him. Because God loves us, we love Him back (1 John 4:19).

In God's announcement of His love, He promises Moses that He will do wonderful things for His people. God will lead them into the Promised Land, too. God makes His Promise with His people again. God also promises that other countries will see His royal beauty and power. "Then the Lord said, 'I am making this agreement with you. I will do miracles in front of all your people. These things have never before been done for any other nation [people group] on earth. The people with you will see my work. I, the Lord, will do wonderful things for you'" (Exodus 34:10, ICB).

But the Israelites needed to obey God and follow His Ten Commandments. Then they would enjoy success. To help them, God asked Moses to write down the Promise, which the people already broke (Exodus 34:27, 28).



When God gave Moses the explanation of His name, Moses bowed down and worshiped the Lord.

THE SHINING FACE OF MOSES (Exodus 34:29–35)

What caused Moses' face to shine so bright? Read Exodus 34:29–35.

After God showed who He was to Moses, Moses went back down to Israel's camp. Moses' face was shining. Did Moses know, at first, that his face was shining? Of course not. The closer you are to the Lord, the more you see your own weaknesses and faults compared to God's perfect and holy life.

What happened to Moses that caused his face to shine? Was Moses' face bright because he stood in front of God for a while? No. Remember, several times in the past, Moses was with the Lord and his face didn't shine after those meetings. At the same time, if Moses didn't go meet with the Lord, his face never would have shone. But when Moses understood God's love and mercy, he completely opened himself to God because of the beauty of His love. Then Moses changed. His face shone. Our hearts and minds experience a similar change when we give ourselves fully to God and allow Him to be the Lord and King of our lives.

How can Jesus change you so that you become loving and kind, the same as He is? Read 2 Corinthians 3:18 for the answer.

Paul compares Moses' shining face with Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:12–18). The glory of Jesus is far more than all the glory that came with the law that God gave to Moses (2 Corinthians 3:7–11). Jesus, together with His law, can be written on our hearts. But we must first fix our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 12:2). Only the power of the Holy Spirit can make this change happen.

Moses is an example for us. Moses shows us what God can do for us when we allow Him to change our hearts. God helps us to become the same as He is in our hearts. This change is what Paul means when he talks about how "we can now live a new life" (Romans 6:4, ERV).

What parts of your life need to show God's love and mercy better? Every part, right? How can thinking about the meaning of the Cross give you hope for an everlasting life in the Savior?



Jesus, together with His law, can be written on our hearts. But we must first fix our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 12:2).



A father and his young son visited a church. They looked at the colorful windows with beautiful pictures of different Bible stories. All of a sudden, the sun started to shine in the glass pictures of people.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Carefully read Ellen G. White, “Idolatry at Sinai,” pages 327–330, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

On a cloudy day, a father and his young son visited a church. They looked at the colorful windows with beautiful pictures of different Bible stories. All of a sudden, the sun started to shine in the glass pictures of people. The people in the pictures shone brightly with light all around them. The small boy asked his father, “Daddy, who are these people?” The father didn’t know much about Christianity, Jesus, or His followers. But the father quickly said, “These people are Christians.” This bright, shining picture stayed in the little boy’s mind. Later, the boy’s teacher asked in class, “Children, do you know who Christians are?” The small boy remembered the bright picture in the church. He answered, “I know. Christians are people who shine.” Jesus told His followers, “‘In the same way, you should be a light for other people. Live so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven’ ” (Matthew 5:16, ERV). Only shining people can cause other people to change their lives for the better.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① “We must come to God with no pride in our hearts. We must be kind, thoughtful, loving, tender, and filled with pity. Then 100 people would become Christians where now only one person accepts the Savior.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, page 189, adapted. What powerful message is in this quote for all of us about how our actions, thoughts, feelings, and behavior can help lead people to Jesus or push them away?
- ② Exodus 34:6, 7 is known as the John 3:16 of the Old Testament. Why?
- ③ How can you explain the beauty of God in Exodus 34:6, 7 to people who ask you who your God is?
- ④ In class, ask people to talk about how Christians changed their lives. How did people who were loving, patient, and forgiving change your life for the better? How did “Christians” who were mean or filled with pride make you feel in your walk with God?

BAATKA'S BEST FRIEND

Baatka felt so lonely. He often stood at the window of his home in Mongolia. Baatka looked out the window and hoped for a real friend. Baatka wanted someone who would be his friend forever.

At 14 years old, Baatka was shy and afraid. He was the only son in his family. Father was always at work. Mother wasn't well, so she couldn't give Baatka much attention. She spent a month in the hospital every year. Baatka felt so alone. He wanted to die.

Then a cousin, Doogii, invited him to go to a Seventh-day Adventist church in Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar. Cousin Doogii said, "Come to church, Baatka. Something wonderful will happen there."

Baatka went to church because he was lonely. He didn't hear a word of the sermon. The microphone wasn't working very well. Also, Baatka had problems hearing. But he liked the church members. They smiled and accepted him. They were friendly. Baatka also liked the singing. The church made him feel good inside. He went back next Sabbath to feel good again.

Church members talked about God as their best Friend.

A church member told Baatka, "God can be your best friend forever, too."

Another member said, "With God as your Friend, you'll never be alone."

Baatka wondered if God was real. Baatka thought, "Can God really be my Friend if I can't see Him?"

After that, Baatka went to church every Sabbath. The church became the only happy place in Baatka's life. The church members became his family. Life started to have meaning for Baatka. He wanted to live.

Slowly, Baatka started to believe God was real. His ears didn't hear God speak. But Baatka heard God's voice in his heart. God became Baatka's best friend. God changed his heart and his life.

Today, Baatka Orgil is 31 and a new person in God. The boy who was quiet and shy is now a church pioneer. Baatka starts new churches in parts of Mongolia where there are no churches.

Baatka says, "I want to help people who are the same as me. That's why I became a Bible worker and church pioneer."

Baatka is now married and has two children. He said he used to think that God chose only the most talented people to serve Him. "But now I know that He chooses only the right people."

He said, "When I didn't believe in myself, God believed in me. If God can believe in me, I want to believe in Him, too."

Thank you for praying for our church pioneers worldwide.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY

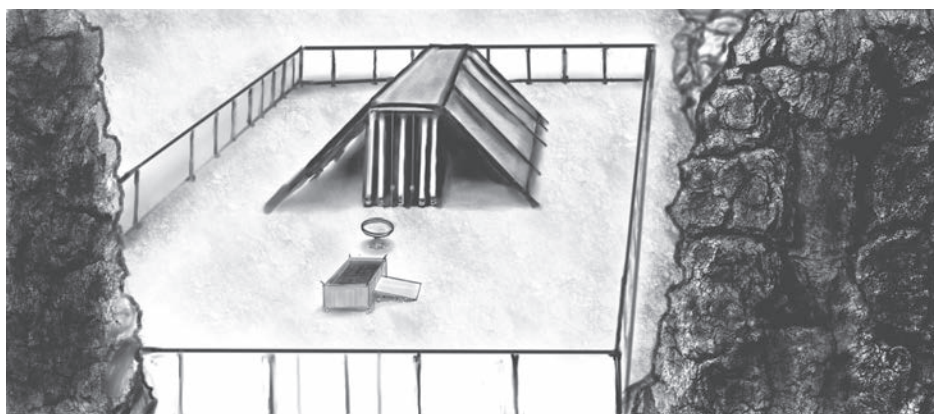


Baatka looked out the window and hoped for a real friend.



Baatka Orgil

The Holy Tent



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 20

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 35:1–3; Exodus 35:4–36:7; Exodus 36:8–39:31; Exodus 40:1–38; John 1:14.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then the cloud covered the Meeting Tent and the Glory of the LORD filled the Holy Tent. . . . So the cloud of the LORD was over [above] the Holy Tent during the day, and at night there was a fire in the cloud. So all the Israelites could see the cloud while they traveled” (Exodus 40:34, 38, ERV).

THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB that God's people had in Bible times was to live in close relationship with the Lord, to obey Him, and to show other people His love (Deuteronomy 4:5–8).

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve hid from God because their sin made them afraid. As sinners, we are afraid of God. Our sin keeps us from understanding His love. The good news is that God makes the first move to repair the broken relationship between Himself and us.

Our most important job is to show other people a correct “picture” of God and His love. When people come to God and believe that He loves them, they will give their lives to Him. Then they will obey what He tells them to do because they know His commandments are for their own good.

The Holy Tent showed the close relationship God wanted with people. God used the Holy Tent to help His people understand important Bible truth. The Holy Tent shows us how God saves sinners who come to Him in faith.



In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve hid from God because their sin made them afraid.

THE SABBATH OF THE LORD (Exodus 35:1–3)

Some Bible thinkers say that the seventh-day Sabbath was only for the Jews. Or they say that the Jews first heard about the Sabbath at Sinai. But both of these ideas are false. God made the Sabbath holy in Eden (read Genesis 2:1–3). Also, the Jews kept the Sabbath long before Sinai (read Exodus 16:22–29). So, there's no question that the Sabbath was very much a part of life for the Hebrew people from the start.

What Bible truth did the people learn when they built the Holy Tent? Read Exodus 35:1–3 for the answer.

The Sabbath and its message was, is, and always will be about God: who He is and what His mighty works are. The Sabbath helps us remember that God made the skies and the earth. The Sabbath also helps us remember that God saves us. The Sabbath helps us think about God, who wants to live with His people. In this way, both the Sabbath and the Holy Tent help us to remember the same thing: God's love in our hearts and lives.

The Sabbath in the Old Testament teaches us five important Bible truths:

First, God made the skies and the earth. The Bible starts with this amazing announcement (Genesis 1:1). The Sabbath helps us remember God's work (Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:8–11). All other Bible truths come from this truth.

Second, the Savior will come. The Savior will win the fight against the snake (Satan) and evil.

Third, God will set up His Kingdom. The Sabbath helps us understand God's kingdom better.

Fourth, the Lord saves us. God's people announce that God is their Lord and Savior. His people understand that God in His mercy saves them because of their faith.

Fifth, God will judge everyone. People who fight against God and reject Him will have no future. The Lord gives everlasting life to the people who follow Him.

The Jews have a saying about the Sabbath: "Israel kept the Sabbath, but the Sabbath also kept Israel." Why is the Sabbath important to us?



The Savior will win the fight against the snake (Satan) and evil.

GOD'S SPECIAL END-TIME PEOPLE (Exodus 35:4–36:7)

Read Exodus 35:4–36:7. What important lessons are in these verses for us today?

Many precious materials were needed to build the Holy Tent. God's people gave the materials. Their hearts were filled with joy as they gave. The people gave gold, silver, brass, fine linen, precious stones, special cloths, wood, olive oil, perfumes, and many other needed things. People also donated their time and skills because many objects for the Holy Tent and its furniture needed to be made. Also, tailors wove clothes for the priests or spiritual leaders, who would work in the Holy Tent. Clothes also must be made for the high priest or top spiritual leader. His clothes included a chest covering and a special hat.

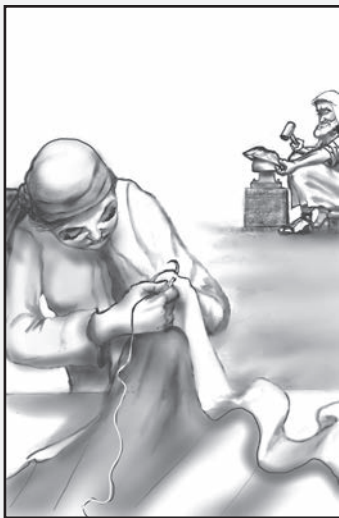
God blessed the Israelites with many gifts from the Egyptians when they left Egypt. Now God gave the Israelites the chance to give thank offerings for God's mercy and His mighty leadership. The hearts of the people were moved to do the work to God's glory.

The people gave so much stuff that the Lord told Moses, "The people have brought too much. We have more than we need to finish the work the LORD told us to do" (Exodus 36:5, ERV). So, Moses had to tell the people to stop donating (read Exodus 36:6, 7).

God's Spirit helped the people build the Holy Tent correctly. Bezalel, Aholiab, and other people were "filled . . . with the Spirit of God" (Exodus 35:31, NKJV). God gave them the wisdom, skills, and knowledge to do the work exactly the way God showed Moses.

From these verses, we see that the gift of the Holy Spirit is not just about spiritual gifts of love, joy, and peace. The gift of the Holy Spirit also includes skills and know-how. God gives His people this wisdom to get His work done. When we are filled with the Spirit, we are not filled with some special spiritual energy or magical power. To help His cause grow, God gives His followers skills to do His work and do it well.

What spiritual gifts did you get when you were filled with the Holy Spirit? Remember, the spiritual gifts can only live in us when we have the fruit of the Spirit (read Galatians 5:22, 23).



People also donated their time and skills because many objects for the Holy Tent and its furniture needed to be made.

BUILDING THE HOLY TENT (Exodus 36:8–39:31)

Read over Exodus 36:8–39:31. Why do you think God gave Moses such a clear plan to follow? What does this plan teach us about how God cares about every part of His work?

Moses carefully built the Holy Tent. He did everything God told him to do when he was on the mountain. The Bible tells us about the different parts of the building plan. There was (1) the Holy Tent with its different cloths, curtains, and parts (Exodus 36:8–38); (2) the ark (Exodus 37:1–9); (3) the special table for the holy bread (Exodus 37:10–16); (4) the lampstand (Exodus 37:17–24); (5) the altar of perfume (Exodus 37:25–29); (6) the altar of burnt offering (Exodus 38:1–7); (7) the bowl or pot for washing (Exodus 38:8); (8) the walled-in space (Exodus 38:9–20); and (9) the material used for the Holy Tent (Exodus 38:21–31). Exodus 39 continues with a discussion about the special clothes that the spiritual leaders wore.

The Holy Tent was an object lesson that showed God's whole plan to save sinners. The Holy Tent showed (1) how much God hates sin and what He will do to solve the sin problem, (2) that God saves sinners who confess their sins, (3) what will happen to evil people, and (4) that God will make a future for His people without evil or sin.

Each day the priests or spiritual leaders did work in the Holy Tent. This work showed how God will save sinners. God showed that He forgave sinners who were sorry for their sins and offered to save them. To get this gift of forgiveness, a sinner must offer a gift. The gift was an animal that must be killed. These animal offerings showed the future death of Jesus. The Savior's blood "makes our lives clean from all sin" (1 John 1:7, NLV). To get this gift, we must confess our sin and accept Jesus' holy life as our own (Psalm 32:1, 2). In this way, God showed sinners He forgave them, and they could rejoice that He saved them.

The priests also did special work each year on the Day of Atonement or the Day When God Removes All Sin. This work shows how God will solve the sin problem forever (Leviticus 16; John 1:29). Right now, Jesus works for us in heaven's temple (Hebrews 7:25). He will solve the sin problem (Daniel 7:13, 14, 22, 27; Daniel 8:14; Revelation 21:4).

People worshiped, praised, and thanked God at the Holy Tent. Worship is about growing our relationship with God, who invites us to fellowship with Him.



Right now, Jesus works for us in heaven's temple (Hebrews 7:25).

GOD IN THE HOLY TENT (Exodus 40:1–38)

What visible sign did God give Israel to show them that He was living with them? Read Exodus 40:1–38 for the answer.

The final chapter of the book of Exodus (Exodus 40) talks about the Holy Tent and the Ten Commandments.

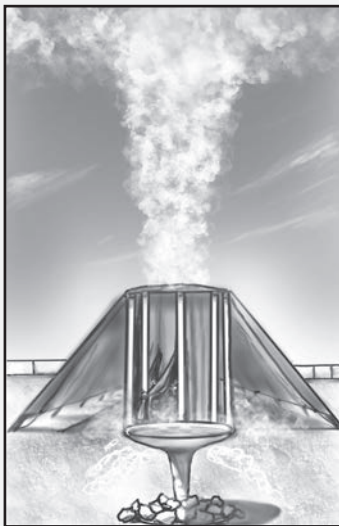
God fills the temple with His glory. God's glory is His love and holy life (Exodus 3:5; Exodus 33:18, 19). The glory is visible as the cloud. The book of Exodus ends with a discussion about how God leads His people in the cloud day and night. In a very powerful way, the Hebrews saw that God was real. More than that, they saw a visible sign that He led them in the cloud.

Moses set up the Holy Tent on the first day of the first month in the second year (Exodus 40:2, 17). Moses offered to God everything connected with the Holy Tent. That included Aaron and his sons, who were God's priests or spiritual leaders. Moses put special oil on them to show that they belonged to God (Exodus 40:9, 13–15). Moses went into the Most Holy Room, the Holy Room, and the walled space around the Holy Tent. Moses gave all these things to God and got the Holy Tent ready to be used for worship (also read Numbers 7:1). That was the only time Moses entered the Most Holy Room. After that, only the high priest entered it on the Day of Atonement or the Day When God Removed All Sin (Leviticus 16:2, 17).

Three times, the Bible says that God or His servant finished doing work: (1) after He made the skies and earth (Genesis 2:1–3), (2) after Moses finished building the Holy Tent (Exodus 40:33), and (3) after Solomon finished the temple (1 Kings 7:51). So, we see a connection between the time when God finished making the skies and earth and Israel's Holy Tent. This connection helps us think about the time when the Lord will live with the saved on the new earth in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is "the Tabernacle [temple] of God" (Revelation 21:2, 3, KJV; compare with Revelation 22:1–4).

God fills the Holy Tent with His glory (Exodus 40:34). So, the story ends in glory that started with Moses being born. The story continued with God's win over the Egyptian gods, the ten punishments, the escape from Egypt, the defeat of the Egyptian army, and God speaking His law on Sinai.

What are ways that you can know God is with you? Why is it important that you know when He is with you?



God fills the Holy Tent with His glory (Exodus 40:34).

JESUS LIVED AMONG US AS ONE OF US (John 1:14)

Jesus became a man and lived among us. How is His becoming a man compared to the Old Testament tabernacle or Holy Tent in the desert? Read John 1:14 for the answer.

Jesus became a man. We don't really understand how that happened. We will study this mystery when we get to heaven. John says that Jesus became a man to show that He lives with us in a real and visible way. Jesus on this earth in a body helps us remember that God in the Old Testament lived with the Israelites in the Holy Tent at Sinai. Later, God lived in the desert as the Israelites journeyed to the Promised Land.

After Jesus became human, He lived with people on this earth. This thought is amazing! The everlasting God came down to us, as one of us. God wants us to know that He truly is "Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). "The name Immanuel means 'God with us' " (Matthew 1:23, NIV).

In Matthew 18:20, Jesus said that if two or three come together in His name, He will be there among them. Jesus is with His people in the Person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus invites His followers to be in close relationship with Him: " 'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him. And he will eat with me' " (Revelation 3:20, ICB).

Read Revelation 21:1–3. What Bible truth do these verses teach us?

The New Jerusalem will come down from heaven to earth. John announces, "I heard a loud voice coming from heaven. It [the voice] said, 'See! God's home is with men. He will live with them. They will be His people. God Himself will be with them. He will be their God' " (Revelation 21:3, NIV). There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:22) because the whole city is the temple. The city is the same size in all its measurements: the sides of the city are as tall as they are wide and long. (The Most Holy Room in the Holy Tent also was the same size in all its measurements. So, this room was in the shape of a perfect square or cube, with all sides equal or the same.) We will live in this perfect city with God on an earth without sin, death, or suffering forever and ever.



Jesus on this earth in a body helps us remember that God in the Old Testament lived with the Israelites in the Holy Tent at Sinai. Later, God lived in the desert as the Israelites journeyed to the Promised Land.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Tabernacle and Its Services,” pages 353–358, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Before the Holy Tent was built, God helped Israel escape from slavery in Egypt. Then God made a Promise with His people. This agreement was a relationship that was meant to continue forever. The Lord would be Israel’s God. They would be His people (Exodus 6:7). The law showed the people what God expected them to do and how to love each other. The Holy Tent was a meeting place. It was a place where God and humans came together. After God saved Israel and promised to be their God forever, the people could meet with God in the place where He chose to live among them.”—*Andrews Bible Commentary: Old Testament*, “Exodus” (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University press, 2020), page 226, adapted.

Ellen G. White says, “In the work done in the Holy Tent, and later in the temple, the people learned each day the important Bible truths about Jesus’ death and saving work. On the Day of Atonement or the Day When God Removes All Sin, the priests or spiritual leaders did a special work. This work helped the people think about the final work that would happen in the worldwide war between God and Satan. At that time, God will make all heaven and earth clean from sin and sinners.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 358, adapted.



“In the work done in the Holy Tent, and later in the temple, the people learned each day the important Bible truths about Jesus’ death and saving work.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Blood was an important part of the work done in the Holy Tent. What did the blood symbolize? What important Bible truths did all these offerings show God’s people?
- ❷ God came to live with us and die for us. What does this amazing gift teach us about God’s love? Also, what does this gift teach us about how much God wants to see us saved in His everlasting kingdom?
- ❸ Read Hebrews 8:1–6. What do these verses teach us about how the Holy Tent on earth showed us what Jesus is doing for us right now in heaven’s temple?

THE SABBATH'S WONDERFUL REWARD

Fernando Joaquim Ge joined a big company of builders in Mozambique. Fernando was a Seventh-day Adventist. So, the company agreed to let Fernando have his Saturdays off. But after three years, the company boss asked Fernando to go on a business trip on Saturday. Fernando told his boss, Alexander, to remember that he didn't work on Saturdays.

But at 5 a.m., Saturday morning, Alexander came to Fernando's house to drive him to Zimbabwe. When Fernando refused to go, Alexander told him not to come back to work until they had a face-to-face meeting.

Fernando and Alexander met many days later. Alexander told Fernando to stay at home for seven days with no pay. Alexander also gave Fernando three choices: (1) quit, (2) work on Saturdays, or (3) give up two days' pay for every Saturday that he missed work. Then Alexander told Fernando to give him his answer in writing after seven days.

Fernando wrote a ten-page letter about his decision. He wrote that he couldn't quit because he needed the job. He also wrote that he couldn't work on Saturdays because he must obey God. Fernando included many Bible verses about the Sabbath. Then he said that he was willing to accept a pay cut for every Saturday he missed work. He also was ready to make up Saturday work on Sundays. Alexander took the letter. Then he told Fernando to keep working while he talked about the letter with his team of managers.

A week later, Alexander called Fernando on a Sunday to come to his house. Fernando rode there on a public bus. Alexander told Fernando to drive a company car to a town 70 miles away to inspect a building. Fernando came back late that night. The public buses stopped running, so he slept at Alexander's house. The next Sunday, Alexander asked Fernando to take his mother out in the company car.

The next day, Alexander held a meeting. Alexander said, "Fernando accepted a pay cut because of his faith in God. But now we see that he is loyal to God. So, he doesn't need to work on Saturdays." Then Alexander gave Fernando the keys to a company car. Alexander said, "Use this car for all company business. You also may use it for your church business, too. And we will pay for the gas. We ask for only one thing. Please ask your pastor to pray for our company to be a success."

From that day in 2003 until today, Fernando hasn't had any Sabbath problems at work. The company car has been a blessing to the church, too. When people see the car, they remember that Fernando keeps the Sabbath.

Fernando says, "When we are loyal to God, He rewards us."

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Alexander gave Fernando the keys to a company car.