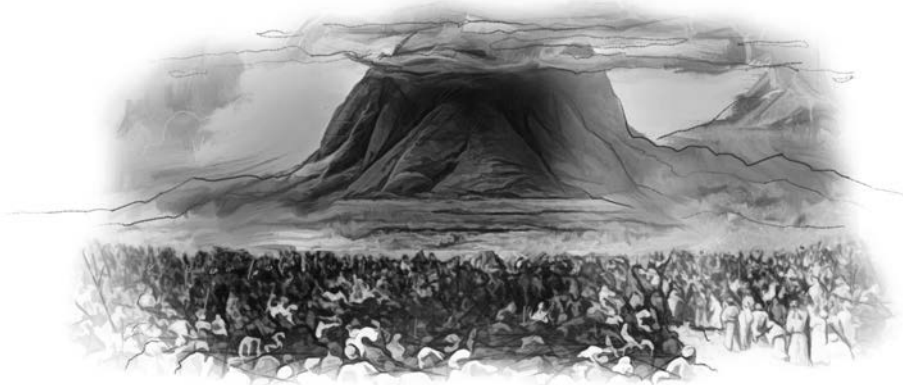


Agreement at Sinai



SABBATH—MAY 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Deuteronomy 1:29–31; Hosea 11:1; Revelation 5:9; Exodus 19:5, 6.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘ “You people saw what I did to the people of Egypt. You saw that I carried you out of Egypt like [the same as] an eagle and brought you here to me” ’ ” (Exodus 19:4, ERV).



“ ‘How deep may I drink?’ ”

“**A LITTLE BOY** got hurt. He was taken to the hospital. The boy was one of seven children. His family was very poor. They often did not have enough of anything. He never had more than only a part of a glass of milk. If the glass was full, he shared it with another brother or sister. Whoever drank first had to be careful not to drink too much. After the little boy was made comfortable in the hospital, the nurse brought him a large glass of milk. The little boy wanted to drink it all so badly. But he remembered how poor his life was at home. So, he asked, ‘How deep may I drink?’ The eyes of the nurse filled with tears. She said, ‘Drink it all, child. Drink it all!’ ”—H. M. S. Richards, “Free Grace,” *Voice of Prophecy News*, June 1950, page 4, adapted.

In many ways, the people of Israel during Bible times are the same as the little boy. God gave Israel many chances to drink deeply from the well of His saving love. God also made Israel free from slavery in Egypt. God showed Israel His loving-favor and His power over the Egyptians. In the same way, God shows us His loving-favor when He forgives us and makes us free from sin.

I CARRIED YOU THE SAME AS AN EAGLE (Exodus 19:4)

While the Israelites are slaves in Egypt, they learn all about the Egyptian gods and religion. No doubt this experience causes the Israelites to forget about God, His plan, and His love for them.

How can the Lord win His people back to Himself?

First, the Lord will show His people how much He loves them. He will make them free from slavery. The Lord also will offer them a wonderful agreement at Sinai.

What two word pictures show us how God brought His people from Egypt to Sinai?

Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:10–12 _____

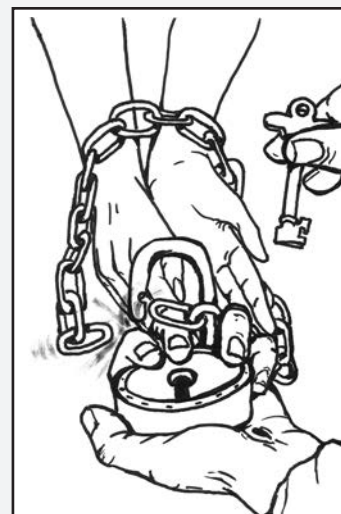
Deuteronomy 1:29–31; Hosea 11:1 _____

These two word pictures show us an eagle and a parent carrying his child. Together, these word pictures show that God knows we are helpless. Read Psalm 103:13, 14. These word pictures also show us that God cares about our needs and our happiness. God is tender. He supports and protects us. He loves to encourage us. Most of all, He wants us to become everything we are meant to be in Him.

“Eagles care deeply for their babies. Eagles also live high on the tops of mountains. The father eagle teaches his babies to fly by carrying his young on his back to the mountaintops above the plain of Sinai. Then the eagle drops the baby eagle and lets it fall. If the baby is too young to fly, then the father eagle will fly under the baby. The father eagle will catch the baby on his back. Then he will fly up again with the baby to the nest on the rocks above. And that, says God, is ‘how I brought you out of Egypt to be mine.’ ”—George A. F. Knight, *Theology of Narration* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), page 128, adapted.

Compare the love that God has for us with our love for each other. How should the love that the Lord has for us help us to love other people more deeply?

Think of some word pictures from your own experience that show that God cares for us. Share your ideas with the class.



The Lord will show His people how much He loves them. He will make them free from slavery.

THE PLAN OF GOD TO SAVE HUMANS (Exodus 6:6, 7)

Read Exodus 6:6, 7. What important rule do we see in these verses? Do you see how often the word “I” is written in these verses, too? What does this show us about how much God does for us in the agreement?

Moses writes about two important stories that show how God saves His people: (1) Moses writes about how God saves Noah and his family from the Flood. (2) Moses also writes about how God makes Israel free from slavery in Egypt. Both stories show us more fully the plan of God to save humans from sin. But the second story helps us understand the most about this saving plan. Let us look at it more closely.

God says to Israel, “ ‘ I will save you ’ ’ ” (Exodus 6:6, ERV). What God really says is “I will be the family Member who saves you.” In Hebrew this word for “family Member” is “go’el.”

“The word written as ‘saves’ in Exodus 6:6 shows us the idea of a family member who buys back another member of his family from slavery. The person is in slavery because he or she owes money and cannot pay it. Or the person is about to go into slavery because of money he or she owes. The people of Israel have no family member who can buy them back from slavery and free them from owing money. But God will be their family member. He will buy His people back from slavery.”—Bernard L. Ramm, *His Way Out* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books Division, G/L Publications, 1974), page 50, adapted.



“The person is in slavery because he or she owes money and cannot pay it.”

How do you understand the idea that God “buys back” His people from slavery? What price must God pay? What does the cost tell us about how much we are worth in the eyes of God? (For the answer, read Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:6; and Revelation 5:9.)

In Exodus 3:8, Nlrv, God says that He has “ ‘ come down ’ ” to save Israel from Egypt. This verb “come down” shows us what God does for humans. God is in heaven. We are on the earth. So, God must “come down” to earth so that He can save us. In the same way, Jesus comes down, lives, suffers, dies on the cross, and then wakes up from the dead. He does all this for us. “The Word [Jesus] became a man and lived among us” (John 1:14, ERV). This is another way of saying that God “came down” to save us.

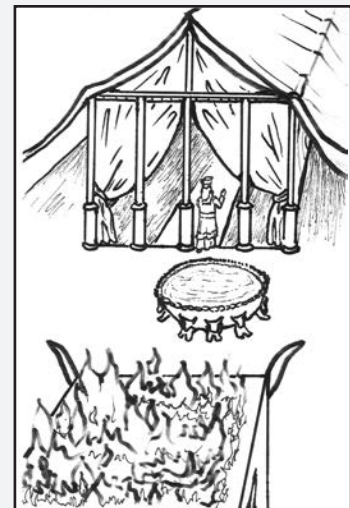
THE SINAI AGREEMENT (Exodus 19–24)

The book of Exodus tells us about three important things: (1) the freedom of Israel from slavery in Egypt, (2) the special agreement of God, and (3) the building of a place of worship where God can live among His people. In Exodus 19–24, Moses writes about the special agreement that God makes with His people. Let us look at a short outline of chapters 19–24. This outline will show us the different parts of the special agreement. We also will see how the different parts of the agreement connect together.

Maybe you do not have time to look up all the verses in the list below. Then be sure to read the list to see how the different parts of the agreement connect together:

1. Israel arrives at Sinai and camps there after God makes them free from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 19:1, 2).
2. God offers to make a special agreement with Israel (Exodus 19:3–6).
3. Israel agrees to enter into the agreement with God (Exodus 19:7, 8).
4. Israel does special things to get ready to accept the agreement (Exodus 19:9–25).
5. God gives Moses the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17).
6. Moses stands between God and Israel. Moses gives the agreement of God to the people (Exodus 20:18–21).
7. God explains important rules of the agreement (Exodus 20:22 to Exodus 23:26).
8. The agreement is finally accepted and made legal (Exodus 24:1–18).

The Sinai agreement is an important part of the plan of God to save humans from sin. This agreement is the 4th agreement that God makes with humans. (Before this, God makes agreements with Adam, Noah, and Abraham.) In the Sinai agreement, God shows Himself more fully to humans than ever before. How does God do this? God uses the sanctuary. The sanctuary is the place of worship that God asks Moses to build. The sanctuary shows Israel how God will save sinners. The different parts of the sanctuary show us the work that the coming Savior will do. God wants His people to share this plan with everyone on the earth. That is what the Sinai agreement with God is all about: sharing with other people the plan of God to save humans from sin. God showed Adam and Eve this same plan in Eden.



The different parts of the sanctuary show us the work that the coming Savior will do.

GOD AND ISRAEL (Exodus 19:5, 6)

“ ‘ “Now obey me completely. Keep my covenant [agreement]. If you do, then out of all the nations [countries] you will be my special treasure. The whole earth is mine. But you will be a kingdom of priests [religious leaders] to serve me. You will be my holy nation.” That is what you must tell the Israelites’ ” (Exodus 19:5, 6, NIV).



They must put blood on the sides of the doors of their houses.

In these verses, the Lord explains His agreement with the children of Israel. Sure, God chooses Israel to be His people. But the Israelites must accept that choice, too. They must work together with God. God cannot make them free from slavery in Egypt without their help. So, the Israelites must do everything that God asks. They must put blood on the sides of the doors of their houses. If the Israelites do not do this, God cannot save them. It is that simple.

Do you see that the Lord does not say to the Israelites, “Too bad for you if you do not want to be My special treasure or My kingdom of religious leaders. You are going to be what I want you to be no matter what you want!” That is not what the Bible says. God does not work that way.

Read Exodus 19:5, 6 again. The Lord commands His people to obey Him. Does this command to obey the Lord show that we are saved by our good behavior and not saved by the mercy of God? How do these verses help you to understand the answer: Romans 3:19–24; Romans 6:1, 2; Romans 7:7; Revelation 14:12?

“We do not earn everlasting life by our obedience. God saves us. His saving us is a gift He freely gives us. We get this gift by faith. Our faith makes us obedient.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 61, adapted.

Think about everything that the Lord wants to do for Israel after He makes them free from slavery in Egypt. The Lord wants to make Israel His special treasure. He also wants to make them a kingdom of religious leaders. The Lord wants to honor them high above every country on the earth, too. Why? So that Israel can preach the Good News about freedom from sin to everyone on earth. The only thing that Israel needs to do to make this happen is to obey God.

PROMISES, PROMISES . . . (Exodus 19:8)

At first, everything looks good. The Lord makes His people free from slavery in Egypt. Then the Lord offers His people the agreement promises. The people accept the offer from the Lord. Israel will do **everything** that the Lord asks them to do. It is a deal “made in heaven,” as we say, right?

Read the verses below. What do they show us about the answer of Israel to the agreement?

Romans 9:31, 32 _____

Romans 10:3 _____

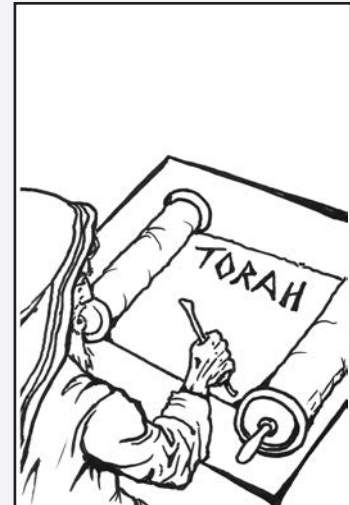
Hebrews 4:1, 2 _____

Whatever God asks us to do, our connection with Him must start with faith. Then our good behavior will follow. Good behavior cannot make us holy in the eyes of God. This was true in the time of Israel; it is true in our time, too.

The Bible tells us again and again that our good behavior is very important. So, why do our good works not make us good in the eyes of God? For the answer, read Isaiah 53:6; Isaiah 64:6; and Romans 3:23.

Sadly, the Hebrew people in Bible times believe that their obedience saves them. They do not understand that their being saved will cause them to be obedient. So, the Israelites try to become holy by obeying the law. They do not know that only faith in the holy life of God can save them. Our being saved by faith is what the Sinai agreement is all about. The Sinai agreement shows the mercy and loving-favor of God. This loving-favor is a gift. God gives this gift freely to everyone who believes in Him. This gift of mercy changes the heart. This change of heart causes the sinner to become obedient. The Israelites have no problem believing that obedience is important. Their problem is understanding that their obedience and good behavior do not save them.

Read Romans 10:3. What is Paul saying in this verse? What happens to people who try to become right with God in their own way? Why does that behavior lead to sin?



The Israelites try to become holy by obeying the law.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Exodus,” pages 281–290; “From the Red Sea to Sinai,” pages 291–302; and “The Law Given to Israel,” pages 303–314; in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“We become slaves when we try to save ourselves by our own good behavior and obedience. This is a legal religion. We cannot obey the law in our own strength. So, we must accept the agreement God made with Abraham. That is our only hope. The agreement with Abraham shows that we are saved by our faith in the mercy of God by Jesus Christ. God preached this Good News to Abraham. This news gave Abraham hope. This is the same Good News that the Bible preaches to us today. This Good News gives us hope, too. Abraham looked to Jesus to save him. Our faith comes from Jesus. He also is the One who makes our faith complete.”
—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 1077, adapted.

“When the Israelites are slaves in Egypt, many of them lose their knowledge about the law of God. The Israelites mix the important rules from the law of God with the way of life around them. God brings the Israelites to Sinai. There, with His own voice, God announces His law.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 334, adapted.



The agreement that God makes with Israel at Sinai shows His loving-favor and mercy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In what ways does the Sinai agreement help keep Israel free? How does it help keep their bodies and their spirits free? (For the answer, read Leviticus 26:3–13; compare Deuteronomy 28:1–14.)
- ② Read again Exodus 19:5, 6. The Lord announces: “ ‘The whole earth is mine’ ’ ” (NirV). Why does the Lord say this to the Israelites? How does the Sabbath commandment help us to understand this Bible truth more fully?
- ③ We understand that God forgives our sins only by our faith in His loving-favor. How does the loving-favor of God help us to live a life of faith and obedience?

Summary: God invites Israel to accept His agreement of mercy. This agreement will keep Israel free in every way. Israel accepts the offer. But they do not have the faith that comes from love. As their later history shows, they fail to understand what the Sinai agreement is really about.

“COME TO CHURCH WITH ME!”

Dr. Hernando cannot stop praising God. Just a short time ago, Hernando started working at the Adventist Health Center. The center is a part of Colombia Adventist University in Medellin, Colombia.

Hernando has been a Christian for a long time. But he never loved God as much as he does now. When no one will hire him as a doctor, the Adventist Health Center offers him a job. The job allows him to spend as much time as he needs with his two-year-old son Samuel, who is very sick.

Hernando loves God so much. His love pours out of his heart. He prays with every patient who wants to pray. Hernando tells everyone about how God saved the life of his son and then gave Hernando a job at the health center. Hernando invites people to the university church. There, Hernando and his family worship every Sabbath. Soon the whole family is baptized.

One Sabbath after Hernando is baptized, he stops at a red light on his way to church with his family. A man selling chewing gum comes up to the car. He holds out packs of gum for sale. Hernando rolls down his window. The street seller hopes to sell the gum to Hernando. But Hernando does not talk about the gum at all. He says, “Come to church with me!”

Right away, the street seller says, “OK. I want to go!”

Hernando invites the man to join his family in the car. The man is from Venezuela. Thousands of Venezuelans have come to Colombia to work because of the hard times back home.

Hernando tells the street seller about all the wonderful things that Jesus has done for him and his family.

The next Sabbath, the man from Venezuela comes back to church. This time he brings his family. After that, the man and his family never miss a Sabbath. Now the man cooks and sells food on the street outside the Adventist Health Center. He uses a food cart that one of the Adventist church members gives him. The man and his family start taking Bible classes. Hernando prays that the family will give their hearts to Jesus.

Hernando says that it is not hard to lead people to Jesus. How does Hernando do it? He follows the command that Jesus gives the man who had been filled with demons. After Jesus ordered the demons to leave the man, Jesus tells him, “ ‘Go home to your family and friends. Tell them about all that the Lord did for you. Tell them how the Lord was good to you’ ” (Mark 5:19, ERV).

Hernando says, “I have not stopped praising God. I tell everyone I can about everything Jesus has done for me. I tell people about how the Lord is good to me. My story has touched the hearts of many people.”

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



The street seller hopes to sell the gum to Hernando. But Hernando does not talk about the gum at all.

