

The Agreement That Continues Forever



SABBATH—OCTOBER 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 12:1–3; Deuteronomy 9:5; Deuteronomy 5:1–21; Deuteronomy 26:16–19.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘I will make My agreement between Me and you and your children after you through their whole lives for all time. I will be God to you and to your children’s children after you’ ” (Genesis 17:7, NLV).



The good news is for every country, tribe, language, and nation.

“**THEN I SAW ANOTHER ANGEL** flying across the sky. He had good news that will last [continue] for ever to tell the people who live on the earth. The good news is for every country, tribe [family group], language, and nation [people living under the same government]” (Revelation 14:6, WE). Do you see the words “good news that will last [continue] for ever”? God promised this Good News to us in Jesus Christ “before He made the world [the earth and everything in it]” (Titus 1:2, WE).

The Good News is really about the special agreement God made with humans (Genesis 17:7; Isaiah 24:5; Ezekiel 16:60; Hebrews 13:20). And this agreement is about the Good News. What is this Good News? Because God loves you, He offers to save you from sin. You cannot earn this gift. All you can do is love God back “ ‘with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength’ ” (Mark 12:30, ERV). How do we show God we love Him? “We show that we love God when we obey his laws” (1 John 5:3, WE).

This week, we will study what Deuteronomy has to say about the agreement.

**THE AGREEMENT AND THE GOOD NEWS
(Genesis 12:1–3)**

From the start, the Good News was the most important part of the agreement God made with humans.

What promise did God make to Abram? Where is the Good News shown in this promise? For the answers, read Genesis 12:1–3; Genesis 15:5–18; and Romans 4:1–5.

Abraham believed in the promises God made to him. So, God in His mercy accepted the faith of Abraham. Abraham promised to obey God (for an example of the obedience of Abraham, read the story about Mount Moriah, in Genesis 22). The Bible tells us, “But people cannot do any work that will make them right with God. So they must trust in him. Then he accepts their faith, and that makes them right with him” (Romans 4:5, ERV). This verse helps us see why Paul uses Abraham as an example. Abraham shows us how to live by the promises in the agreement between God and His people.

We see this idea in the whole Bible. In Galatians 3, Paul includes a quote from Genesis 15:6, saying: “ ‘Abraham believed God, and because of this faith he was accepted as one who is right with God’ ” (Galatians 3:6, ERV). Later, Paul says, “All people who believe are blessed the same as Abraham was” (Galatians 3:9, ERV). God makes His promises to everyone. Everyone includes Jew and non-Jew alike. Paul explains that “the true [real] children of Abraham are those who have faith” (Galatians 3:7, ERV). The children of Abraham are made right with God in the same way Abraham was. They are made right because of their faith. Yes, God commands them to obey His law as part of His agreement. But good behavior does not make God accept people.

Hundreds of years before Paul, Jeremiah talks about the New Agreement. Jeremiah shows how the agreement and the law are connected: “ ‘In the future I will make this agreement with the people of Israel.’ This message is from the LORD. ‘I will put my teachings in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people’ ” (Jeremiah 31:33, ERV). These words help us remember the words Moses wrote: “ ‘I will walk with you and be your God. And you will be my people’ ” (Leviticus 26:12, ERV).

How are the law and the Good News connected in the Three Angels’ Messages in Revelation 14?



**“ ‘I will put my teachings in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts’ ”
(Jeremiah 31:33, ERV).**

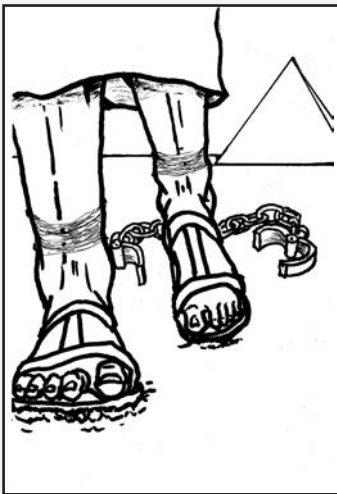
THE AGREEMENT AND ISRAEL (Deuteronomy 9:5)

“You are not going in to take over their land because you have done what is right or honest. It’s because those nations are so evil. That’s why the LORD your God will drive them out to make room for you. He will do what he said he would do. He made a promise to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’ ” (Deuteronomy 9:5, NIV; read also Deuteronomy 9:27). What does this verse teach you about the agreement promises God made to His people?

In this verse, we see that God makes promises because of His love and mercy. God works for His people all the time. God is with His children when they make awful mistakes. (The Good News works the same way for us today, for sure.) God gives His favor to Israel because of the promise He made to their fathers long ago.

Moses often talks to the Israelites about the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Read Exodus 2:24; Exodus 6:8; and Leviticus 26:42. What is being said in these verses? How does that show us how the agreement promises work?



In His agreement with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God promised to free the children of Israel from Egypt.

In His agreement with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God promised to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. The time when God made His people free from slavery in Egypt is named the Exodus. The Exodus is a word picture for the mercy and loving-favor of God. So, what does the Exodus help us to understand about how the agreement promises work? Before the children of Israel were born, God made promises to save them. So, the Israelites did not do anything to earn these promises by their good behavior.

Of course, God did not only free them from Egypt. He also took them to Sinai. At Sinai, God made His agreement with His people (read Exodus 20). The Good News and the law were the most important parts of the agreement. God commanded His people to obey His Ten Commandments. Their obedience showed that they knew the Lord and that He already saved them. So, again and again, in Deuteronomy, God asks His people to obey the law as part of their agreement with Him.

The mercy of God saves us. So, what part should the law of God have in our lives today? Why is the law so important to our experience with God?

THE BOOK ABOUT THE AGREEMENT (Deuteronomy 5:1–21)

The word for the agreement between God and His people comes from the Hebrew word **“berit.”** **“Berit”** shows us that the agreement with God is more than a business deal. The agreement is about a special connection and friendship God wants to have with His people. **“Berit,”** or agreement, is written many times in Deuteronomy. That is why many Bible experts name Deuteronomy **“The Book About the Agreement.”**

Look at Deuteronomy 5:1–21. How do these verses show us that the agreement is an important idea to the book of Deuteronomy?

Soon after God frees His people from Egypt, God makes His agreement with them at Sinai. This agreement happens right before God commands the Israelites to enter the Promised Land. But the Israelites do not enter. 40 years later, God commands the Israelites to enter the Promised Land again. Their entering the Promised Land is an important part of the promises God made to Abram in His agreement (Genesis 12:7; Exodus 12:25). So, God wants His people to remember that obedience is an important part of the agreement with Him. That is why the Lord gives Moses the Ten Commandments to give to the people again.

For sure, the Lord will keep His promises to His people that He made in His agreement long ago. God also wants His people to do their part, too. That is why Moses tells the people to remember that God wrote His law for them in the past: **“He told you His agreement which He told you to keep, the Ten Laws. And He wrote them on two pieces of stone’**” (Deuteronomy 4:13, NLV). God gave His law to His people at Sinai. Now God gives His law to His people again, in Moab, just before the people enter the Promised Land. As we saw already, the Promised Land is part of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob hundreds of years earlier. This promise shows the agreement that **“will continue forever”** (Genesis 17:7, ERV). God planned this agreement before He made this earth.

“Before our earth was made, God the Father and His Son agreed to save humans if Satan caused them to sin. The Father took the hand of the Son. The Son took the hand of the Father. They held hands to show Their promise that Jesus Christ will offer Himself for the sins of humans.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 834, adapted.



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HIS SPECIAL PEOPLE (Deuteronomy 26:16–19)

As modern people, we may have a difficult time understanding the people who lived in Canaan while Israel wandered in the desert. Many worldwide kingdoms have come and gone since then. Only ruins are left (and often nothing is left at all). So, what can we really know about the small people groups that lived in the same area as Israel did?

Not much. But we do know one thing: these people believed in many gods. They bowed down to statues of gods and worshiped nature. They killed children as offerings to their gods. Try to make a picture in your mind of a people and religion that think it is OK to do that to their own children. And worse, they did it in the name of some god!

No wonder the Lord warns His people again and again not to do what the people around them do: “ ‘You will enter the land the Lord your God is giving you. But don’t learn to do the terrible [awful] things the other nations [people groups] do’ ” (Deuteronomy 18:9, ICB).

God had a special purpose for choosing Israel above all the people on the earth to be His special people. God wanted Israel to tell everyone on earth about Him. God wanted Israel to teach other people that He is the One who made the earth and sky. The Lord is the only God there is.



The people who lived in Canaan bowed down to statues of gods and worshiped nature.

Read Deuteronomy 26:16–19. How do these verses show us what the special friendship between God and His people is all about? What type of people does God want the Israelites to become? How will this change show that they keep the special agreement? What lessons can this teach us?

Moses starts with the words “this day.” “This day” means “right now” or “again.” This word choice is interesting. God commanded His people to obey Him always, right? So, “this day” shows us that God wants His people to make the choice again. The people need to choose again, right now, to obey God, be holy, and be His special people. These choices show why they are His people. Only Israel knows God and how He wants people to live. Israel has “present truth.” Present truth is the Bible truth people need most for their time. God asks Israel to live the truth until Jesus, the living Truth (John 14:6), comes.

Why is the idea of giving ourselves to God and obeying Him “this day” also important to us?

OTHER WORD PICTURES FOR THE AGREEMENT (Deuteronomy 8:5)

For a long time, Bible experts have seen that the agreement between God and His people is much the same as agreements made between kingdoms in Old Testament times. We should not be surprised by this information at all. God often works with His people in ways that they already know about. Then they can understand Him better.

At the same time, we often get the wrong idea about the Bible agreement. We may think that the agreement is only a legal piece of paper full of rules. (God is the Law-giver, for sure.) But the agreement between God and His people is about more than rules. The agreement is about a special heart connection and friendship God wanted with His people. The agreement shows us that God wanted to be close to His people. So, the Bible uses other word pictures to help show us this deeper understanding about the agreement.

Read Deuteronomy 8:5; Deuteronomy 14:1; and Deuteronomy 32:6, 18–20. What word pictures are in these verses? How do these word pictures show the special connection God wants with His chosen people?

Read Deuteronomy 4:20 and Deuteronomy 32:9. What word pictures are in these verses? How do these word pictures show the friendship God wants with His people?

Each example shows us the idea of family. Our family connections should be the most loving ties we have with people. God wants to be this close with us, too. After the followers of Jesus turned from Him at the cross, Jesus still wanted to be close to them. So, when Jesus woke up from the dead, He told the two women with the same name, Mary: “Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee. They will see me there” (Matthew 28:10, WE). Do you see that Jesus says, “my brothers”? This shows us that Jesus loves His followers the same as family. This example shows us what friendship between God and humans is all about: mercy and love from God to people who did nothing to earn it.

How close do you feel in your heart to God? How can you grow closer to Him and learn to love Him more? At the same time, you must remember that your part of your friendship with God includes obeying Him. How are loving and obeying God in agreement with each other?



Our family connections should be the most loving ties we have with people.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “People who try to obey the law in their own strength will become prisoners. They will have a legal religion. Our only hope is to accept the agreement God made with Abraham. In this agreement, God gives us mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. We get these gifts from God by our faith in Jesus. The Good News the Bible preaches to us today is the same Good News that God preached to Abraham. This Good News gives us hope. Abraham looked to Jesus. Jesus starts the work to save us. Jesus will finish the work to save us, too.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 1077, adapted.

“When Jesus hung on the cross, He cried out, ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30 [ERV]). Jesus said those words on the cross to the Father. The agreement they made long ago has finally happened. Now Jesus announces, Father, the work You gave Me is finished. I have done what You asked, O My God. I have finished the saving work You gave Me to do. I hope You are pleased. If You are, ‘Father, I want the people that you have given me to be with me.’ (John 17:24 [WE]).”
—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 834, adapted.



“People who try to obey the law in their own strength will become prisoners.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Before the earth is made, the Father and Son make an agreement to save humans if they sin. Why should this news encourage us? What does this Bible truth show us about how much God wants us in His kingdom?
- ② As a church, what work does God give us to do that He gave to Old Testament Israel? How can we avoid making the same mistakes the Israelites made?
- ③ Why are the Good News and the promises about the Good News so important to the New Agreement? What verses can you find in the New Testament that show God did not throw out the law or obedience under the New Agreement, as many Christians now teach? Why do you think they teach this false idea?

BLAST IN BEIRUT

All afternoon, the wind shakes the front door hard. So, I do not worry when I feel the ground shake the first time.

But the second time the ground shakes, I know something is wrong. I live in a city where there is a lot of war. When the ground shakes, I ask, “Is it fireworks? A machine-gun? A car bomb? A fighter jet flying over my house?” After I live for a while in Lebanon, I learn that when the ground shakes, often something bad happens in the city.

I step out onto the front porch. My house sits on top of a hill above the Middle East University. I look across the city of Beirut to the Mediterranean Sea. I see clouds that look the same as a giant mushroom. The mushroom cloud moves very fast across the sky. “This is not normal,” I tell myself. “This is not good at all.”

I turn to go back in my house when a big blast covers me. A strong wind, full of dirt and trash, pushes me back into my house. I grab the door, but I cannot shut it. The bomb shakes the walls of my house and almost makes me fall. The curtains at my window wave wildly around me.

I want to look out the window to see what is happening. But I am afraid another blast may come. I hide in the hallway. My hands shake. Then everything grows strangely quiet.

Minutes later, Osman, my student, calls me. Just before the blast, I gave him a violin lesson online. I answer my phone. On my phone screen, the eyes of Osman are big and scared. His face is sweaty. He moves his phone around his tiny apartment so I can see. The apartment is destroyed. “It is all broken, Miss,” he says.

This experience is not new to Osman. His family was bombed out of Syria six years earlier. The August 2020 blast that blew up a warehouse, killed 200 people, and destroyed the apartment where his family lives. For Osman, bombs are a normal part of life.

I cannot stop or keep this part of life from happening. But we serve a God who can change what we cannot change. Our prayers give Him permission to stop the evil. God can make good things come from the bad things that happened. I pray that the name of God will be honored because of my life here at the Middle East University in Lebanon.

Kathie Lichtenwaller is part of the tentmaking plan at the Middle East and North Africa Union. This story shows Mission Purpose number 2 of the “I Will Go” plan for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Purpose number 2 is: “We will help make the Adventist Church grow strong in new ways in large cities. We will share Jesus with people from non-Christian religions.” Learn more at IWillGo2020.org.

INSIDE *Story*

by KATHIE LICHTENWALTER



I hide in the hallway. My hands shake.

