

# ***The Promise: God's Everlasting Covenant Covenant at Sinai***

Lesson #7 for May 15, 2021

Scriptures: Deuteronomy 1:29-31; 29:10-13; Hosea 11:1; Revelation 5:9; 14:12; Exodus 19:4-6; Romans 6:1-2; 10:3.

1. Try to grasp all that God offers us. And what does He expect from us in return? What makes us eligible for this marvelous exhibition of divine grace? And how is it supposed to impact us? Could it really deliver us from sin as it delivered the Israelites from Egypt?
2. The Bible describes the bondage of Israel to the Egyptians as extending over 430 years. A careful review of all the details makes it clear that half of that time, 215 years, was the time from when Abram/Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees until Jacob died in Egypt. The other 215 years included their time in Egypt itself, with some of that time in slavery. In the early portion, Joseph was held in high respect in Egypt. How did that extended time in Egypt impact their thinking about God? What did God need to do to win them back?
3. In the early chapters of Exodus, we read the story of the birth of Moses, his protection from being killed as an infant, his time with his humble Hebrew parents, and his time being raised in the palace as a son of Pharaoh. It looked like everything had come to naught when he killed an Egyptian and then fled to the land of Midian. But, God sent him there to be trained for his real job which began at the age of 80!
4. When Moses returned to Egypt and in cooperation with Aaron predicted all of those plagues that fell on Egypt, they were finally able to get the children of Israel released from Egyptian bondage.
5. But, they soon discovered that it was easier to get Israel out of Egypt than it was to get "Egypt" out of Israel!

**Exodus 19:4:** "You saw what I, the LORD, did to the Egyptians and how I carried you as an eagle carries her young on her wings, and brought you here to me."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Exodus 19:4). New York: American Bible Society.

**Deuteronomy 32:10-12:** <sup>10</sup> "He found them wandering through the desert, a desolate, windswept wilderness.

He protected them and cared for them,  
as he would protect himself.

<sup>11</sup> Like an eagle teaching its young to fly,  
catching them safely on its spreading wings,  
the LORD kept Israel from falling.

<sup>12</sup> The LORD alone led his people  
without the help of a foreign god."—*Good News Bible.\**

**Deuteronomy 1:29-31:** <sup>29</sup> "But I said, 'Don't be afraid of those people. <sup>30</sup>The LORD your God will lead you, and he will fight for you, just as you saw him do in Egypt <sup>31</sup>and in the desert. You saw how he brought you safely all the way to this place, just as a father would carry his son.'"—*Good News Bible.\**

**Hosea 11:1:** The LORD says,

"When Israel was a child, I loved him

and called him out of Egypt as my son."—*Good News Bible.\**

6. Why did God allow the Israelites to go through that terrible “fiery furnace” experience in Egypt? What might have happened if they had stayed in Palestine? Jacob’s sons were marrying Canaanite women, and they probably would have just faded into Canaanite society! But, God had a plan. Earlier, when Abram/Abraham fled to Egypt because of a drought and lied about his wife, he was “escorted” out of Egypt. A law was passed that said Egyptians should not associate with those who herd cattle and sheep.

Abraham had been greatly favored by the king; even now Pharaoh would permit no harm to be done him or his company, but ordered a guard to conduct them in safety out of his dominions. **At this time laws were made prohibiting the Egyptians from intercourse [interaction] with foreign shepherds in any such familiarity as eating or drinking with them.... Pharaoh saw in this stranger a man whom the God of heaven honored, and he feared to have in his kingdom one who was so evidently under divine favor. Should Abraham remain in Egypt, his increasing wealth and honor would be likely to excite the envy or covetousness of the Egyptians, and some injury might be done him, for which the monarch would be held responsible, and which might again bring judgments upon the royal house.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 130.2-131.0.<sup>†‡</sup>

7. Thus, when Jacob and his family went to Egypt, they were forced to remain separate from the Egyptians because of this law. That preserved their separate identity. Did God arrange for that experience with Abram/Abraham because He knew what would happen in the future?
8. How does God treat us even in our day?

**Psalm 103:13-14:** <sup>13</sup> As a father is kind to his children,  
so the LORD is kind to those who honour him.

<sup>14</sup> He knows what we are made of;

he remembers that we are dust.—*Good News Bible*.\*

9. Look at God’s first offer of a covenant to the children of Israel.

**Exodus 6:6-7:** <sup>6</sup> [God said to Moses:] “So tell the Israelites that I say to them, ‘I am the LORD; I will rescue you and set you free from your slavery to the Egyptians. I will raise my mighty arm to bring terrible punishment upon them, and I will save you. <sup>7</sup>I will make you my own people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am the LORD your God when I set you free from slavery in Egypt.’”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†‡</sup>

10. What do you see in this statement? Who is doing all the promising? God did all the promising! There are two great salvation stories in the writings of Moses: (1) The story of Noah, and (2) The story of the exodus from Egypt.
11. What kind of offer was God making to the children of Israel? When He offered to *redeem* them, what did that imply? The Hebrew word *go’el* implied that God approached the children of Israel as if He was a relative, buying them back from slavery and bondage in Egypt.

“The word *redeem* in verse 6 [of Exodus 6] refers to a member of a family buying back or ransoming another member of the family, especially when that member was in slavery for debt or about to go into slavery. Israel apparently had no earthly relative to redeem her, but God was now Israel’s relative, her kinsman redeemer.”—Bernard L. Ramm, *His Way Out* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books Division, G/L Publications, 1974), p. 50.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Monday, May 10 including the italic type, the brackets, and the content in the brackets in the paragraph].<sup>†§</sup>

12. What does it mean to say that God ransoms us? Are we bought back from the slavery to sin? What price had to be paid to do that? Does that say anything about how God views us? When a price has to be paid, it usually is paid to someone. To whom was that price paid? And what did God expect to get from that offer He made for us?

**Mark 10:45:** “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served; he came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

**1 Timothy 2:6:** ... Who gave himself to redeem everyone. That was the proof at the right time that God wants everyone to be saved.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Revelation 5:9:** They sang a new song:

“You are worthy to take the scroll  
and to break open its seals.

For you were killed, and by your sacrificial death **you bought for God**

**people from every tribe, language, nation, and race.**”—*Good News Bible*.\*†

**Exodus 3:8:** “And so I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of Egypt to a spacious land, one which is rich and fertile and in which the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites now live.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

**John 1:14:** The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father’s only Son.—*Good News Bible*.\*

13. What is implied by God’s statement, “I have come down to rescue them”? (Exodus 3:8)
14. Reviewing the story of Exodus, we notice three main events: (1) The exodus itself, (2) God’s offer of establishing a covenant with His people, Israel, and (3) The building of the tabernacle-sanctuary.
15. Look at an overview of Exodus 19-24:
1. Israel’s arrival and encampment at Sinai after being delivered by the Lord (*Exod. 19:1, 2*)
  2. God’s proposal of a covenant with Israel (*Exod. 19:3-6*)
  3. Israel’s response in acceptance of the covenant (*Exod. 19:7, 8*)
  4. Preparations for formally receiving the covenant (*Exod. 19:9-25*)
  5. Proclamation of the Ten Commandments (*Exod. 20:1-17*)
  6. Moses as covenant mediator (*Exod. 20:18-21*)
  7. Covenant principles spelled out (*Exod. 20:22-23:22*)
  8. Ratification of the covenant (*Exod. 24:1-18*)—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Tuesday, May 11.<sup>§</sup>
16. It is interesting to note in Exodus 19:8 that the children of Israel promised God that whatever He said, they would do! That promise by the people was repeated in Exodus 24:3,7.
17. God also spelled out in some detail what He expected of the children of Israel. He reinforced it by appearing Himself, although shrouded in a cloud, on the top of Mount Sinai.

**Exodus 24:15-18:** <sup>15</sup>Moses went up Mount Sinai, and a cloud covered it. <sup>16-17</sup>**The dazzling light of the LORD’s presence came down on the mountain. To the Israelites the light looked like a fire burning on top of the mountain. The cloud covered the mountain for six days, and on the seventh day the LORD**

**called to Moses from the cloud.** <sup>18</sup>Moses went on up the mountain into the cloud. There he stayed for forty days and nights.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

18. How clearly do you think the children of Israel understood what was involved in that covenant? Did any of them, besides Moses and perhaps Aaron, understand the implications of what they were told? Or, was this just a “sandbox illustration” of God’s plans?
19. It is important to notice that immediately after that encounter at Mount Sinai, Moses was given instructions for the building of the tabernacle-sanctuary. The children of Israel spent several months at the foot of Mount Sinai, being instructed by Moses and building the sanctuary.
20. At the end of the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, Moses gave some final instructions to the people of Israel. At that point, do you think they better understood the relationship that God wanted to have with them?

**Deuteronomy 29:10-15:** <sup>10</sup> “Today you are standing in the presence of the LORD your God, all of you—your leaders and officials, your men, <sup>11</sup>women, and children, and the foreigners who live among you and cut wood and carry water for you. <sup>12</sup>You are here today to enter into this covenant that the LORD your God is making with you and to accept its obligations, <sup>13</sup>so that the LORD may now confirm you as his people and be your God, as he promised you and your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. <sup>14</sup>You are not the only ones with whom the LORD is making this covenant with its obligations. <sup>15</sup>He is making it with all of us who stand here in his presence today and also with our descendants who are not yet born.”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*</sup>

21. Read Exodus 19:5-6 again. In what sense were the children of Israel supposed to be a kingdom of priests? A holy nation? What does that imply? What is a priest expected to do? Notice carefully that they were expected to do their part; they were to obey.
22. God did not give them a collection of commands without asking any response on their part.
23. Paul, in his masterpiece on the plan of salvation which we call Romans, makes these comments about our relationship to the law and God.

**Romans 3:19-26:** <sup>19</sup> Now we know that everything in the Law applies to those who live under the Law, in order to stop all human excuses and bring the whole world under God’s judgement. <sup>20</sup>**For no one is put right in God’s sight by doing what the Law requires; what the Law does is to make people know that they have sinned.**

<sup>21</sup> But now God’s way of putting people right with himself has been revealed. It has nothing to do with law, even though the Law of Moses and the prophets gave their witness to it. <sup>22</sup>God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: <sup>23</sup>everyone has sinned and is far away from God’s saving presence. <sup>24</sup>But by the free gift of God’s grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. <sup>25-26</sup>**God offered him, so that by his blood [footnote: 3:25-26 by his blood; or by his sacrificial death] he should become the means by which people’s sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that he is righteous. In the past he was patient and overlooked people’s sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to demonstrate his righteousness. In this way God shows that he himself is righteous and that he puts right everyone who believes in Jesus.**—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†§</sup>

24. Notice carefully that God apparently overlooked men’s former sins. There was a much more important thing that He needed to accomplish: That was to **demonstrate His own**

**righteousness in the eyes of the onlooking universe as well as in the eyes of us humans.** And how was that view of God's righteousness supposed to impact us?

**Romans 6:1-2:** <sup>1</sup>What shall we say, then? Should we continue to live in sin so that God's grace will increase? <sup>2</sup>Certainly not! We have died to sin—how then can we go on living in it?—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Romans 7:7:** Shall we say, then, that the Law itself is sinful? Of course not! **But it was the Law that made me know what sin is.** If the Law had not said, "Do not desire what belongs to someone else," I would not have known such a desire.—*Good News Bible*.\*<sup>†</sup>

**Revelation 14:12:** This calls for endurance on the part of God's people, those who obey God's commandments and are faithful to Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith.**—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*\* 61.1.<sup>†</sup> [So, which comes first?]<sup>‡</sup>

25. What did God realistically expect from the Israelites? Was He expecting a spiritual, intellectual, even moral response? What form of obedience is God asking of us today? Are we to witness to the truth about God? To whom are we to witness? The priests were the children's teachers.
26. Review Exodus 19:8; 24:3-4. Were the children of Israel just frightened into promising obedience?

**Romans 9:31-32:** <sup>31</sup>While God's people, who were seeking a law that would put them right with God, did not find it. <sup>32</sup>And why not? Because they did not depend on faith but on what they did. And so they stumbled over the "stumbling stone."—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Romans 10:3:** For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness.—*New Revised Standard Version*.\*

**Hebrews 4:1-2:** <sup>1</sup>Now, God has offered us the promise that we may receive that rest he spoke about. Let us take care, then, that none of you will be found to have failed to receive that promised rest. <sup>2</sup>**For we have heard the Good News, just as they did. They heard the message, but it did them no good, because when they heard it, they did not accept it with faith.**—*Good News Bible*.\*<sup>†</sup>

27. What does it mean *to accept the message with faith*?
28. In a previous lesson, we talked about *faith*. Faith is just a relationship with God as with a Friend.
29. So, what is the relationship between faith and works? The Bible repeatedly suggests that we are judged by our works! **How can we be saved by faith but judged by works?**

**Isaiah 53:6:** All of us were like sheep that were lost,  
each of us going his own way.  
But the LORD made the punishment fall on him,  
the punishment all of us deserved.—*Good News Bible*.\* [See Romans 6:23.]<sup>‡</sup>

**Isaiah 64:6:** All of us have been sinful; even our best actions are filthy through and through. Because of our sins we are like leaves that wither and are blown away by the wind.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Romans 3:23:** Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence.—*Good News Bible*.\*

30. Unfortunately, the children of Israel came to think that a mechanical following of God's will would save them, even though the rest of their lives were clearly contrary to God's covenant. Their obedience was not the obedience based on faith which is a true relationship with God the Father and His Son.

31. So, what is the difference between obedience that is not based on faith and obedience that is based on faith? Is one "genuine" while the other is "fake"? How can we make sure that our obedience is based on faith? Is our relationship with God (i.e., faith) the most important thing in our lives? Why is it so easy to slip into some pattern of works and think that we are saved? Paul had some words to say about that as well.

**Romans 10:3:** For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness.—*New Revised Standard Version*.\*

32. What happens to people who try to earn their way to heaven by following a "legal religion"?

**The spirit of bondage is engendered by seeking to live in accordance with legal religion, through striving to fulfill the claims of the law in our own strength.** There is hope for us only as we come under the Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus. The gospel preached to Abraham, through which he had hope, was the same gospel that is preached to us today, through which we have hope. Abraham looked unto Jesus, who is also the Author and the Finisher of our faith.—Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*,\* September 22, 1892, par. 1; Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*,\* vol. 6, 1077.7.†

33. Do we "love" our neighbors because we are "required" to do so? Or, because we love following the example of Jesus?

34. God does not desire the type of obedience that springs from fear or obligation.

**The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.**—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*\* 97.3-98.0 (1900).† [So-called "obedience" rendered because it is required is not obedience in God's eyes.]‡

**A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. *If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints.*** Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,\* July 22, 1897, par. 11.† [Italic type is added.]‡ [Compare 12MR 236.1 which has minor differences. Also compare *That I May Know Him* 120.4 in which the crucial section in italic type above is omitted.]‡

35. God repeatedly told the children of Israel how He would bless them if they would just maintain that right relationship with Him. For example, see Leviticus 26:3-13 and Deuteronomy 28:1-15.

36. In what ways did God bless, or perhaps curse, the children of Israel? Did God actually change the fertility of the animals based on how the Israelites were serving Him? Or, is there some other reason why crops and animals were prospering or failing? Think of Elijah and Jezebel!
37. In many places in the Old Testament, God tried to emphasize to the Israelites that they were not His only children. He repeatedly suggested that the whole earth was His and that the children of Israel were supposed to be reaching out to all the other children of God.
38. Who created the earth? Who will re-create it in the end? Who controls what happens in/to the earth? Who is responsible for global warming? Volcanoes? Earthquakes? Floods? And droughts? Is it correct to call these things “acts of God”?
39. Many of our Christian friends, and I am sorry to say many Seventh-day Adventists, have come to think of God as a harsh dictator up in heaven. They believe that if God the Son, Jesus Christ, was not constantly pleading with the Father, the Father might lose His temper and zap all of us. And so, they constantly focus on being forgiven. They believe that if God has forgiven them, then He will not zap them. But, is that a correct picture of what is going on in heaven?
40. Everyone is forgiven! God is forgiveness Personified. But, God’s forgiveness does not guarantee our salvation! The soldiers who were nailing Jesus to the cross were forgiven; but, they certainly were not eternally saved!

**Luke 23:34:** Jesus said, “Forgive them, Father! They don’t know what they are doing.”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*</sup> [Would God the Father have said that?]<sup>†</sup>

41. We know what happened to the children of Israel. They essentially ignored or failed to understand God’s covenant offer of grace. But, we do not need to follow their example of failure.
42. When God first brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, He said that He would treat them like an eagle treats its young.

“When an eagle wants to teach its little ones to fly . . . , it prods one of the little eaglets and with its beak, noses it out of the nest. The eaglet starts to fall, and the great eagle flies underneath, puts its wing out, catches the little one on its back and flies a mile into the air.

“When you can hardly see the eagle as a point in the sky, it turns sideways, and down falls the little eaglet, which goes fluttering maybe a thousand feet.

“Meanwhile, the eagle circles around the eaglet and underneath it, the eagle catches the eaglet on its wings and carries the eaglet up in the air again. After dishing the eaglet out again and letting it go, the eaglet comes down farther and farther—sometimes within a hundred feet of the ground.

“Again the great eagle catches the little one on its back and up they go another mile. Little by little the eaglet will learn how to fly. The eagle knows when the eaglet is tired; it spoons the eaglet into the nest, noses out the next one and starts off again.”—Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations* (Dallas, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1998), pp. 3050, 3051.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*<sup>\*</sup> 93].<sup>‡§</sup>

With His sharp talons of grace, the Mountain Eagle of eternity prodded the Hebrew eaglet from the haughty nest of Egyptian oppression. At the Red Sea, the eaglet plummeted into panic when it heard the desert floor thunder with the ensuing chariot wheels of injustice. As the eaglet’s faith fluttered, it beheld two massive, gaping water walls that rose in glorious attention, saluting the majestic Eagle’s omnipotence. Between the lucid water walls, a dry highway had been carved out in supernatural fashion, pointing the trembling eaglet to safe passage.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*<sup>\*</sup> 93.

43. Read Exodus 19:7-8 and Exodus 32. In Exodus 32 we read of the terrible sin at the foot of Mount Sinai. While the cloud of God and His glory were hovering over the top of the mountain, at the bottom some of the Israelites were dancing, drunk and naked, around a golden calf. Not only that but also they called it “a festival to honor *Yahweh!*”
44. When God told Moses what was happening, Moses pleaded with *Yahweh* and, in effect, said: “If you allow your people to perish, what will the Egyptians think? You must change your mind and stop being angry. Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”
45. Then, Moses went back down the mountain carrying those two tables of stone, written on by the finger of God. Moses was so upset that he dropped the tables of stone, and they broke just as the children of Israel had been breaking God’s commandments right in front of Him. So, Moses ground up the golden calf and threw the powder into the stream of water and made the children of Israel drink it. Then, he turned to God and, in effect, said: “Please forgive them. And if you cannot forgive them, remove my name from the book in which you have written the names of your people.” And God responded, “Only those who have sinned against me will have their names removed from the book.”
46. We need to understand from this terrible experience of the children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai that there is a great truth: We are not saved by faith and works. We are saved by faith that works. But, **it is our works when they are correctly motivated by a true faith that demonstrate that faith and lead to salvation.**
47. Has God entered into a contract with the Seventh-day Adventist Church? If so, what does that contract say? What has God asked us to do? Could we really carry the gospel to the whole world?

**Matthew 24:14:** “And this Good News about the Kingdom will be preached through all the world for a witness to all nations; and then the end will come.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

48. If we do not do it, who will?
49. Does it seem to you like a partnership between God and us is incredibly lopsided? God is all-powerful, the Creator of the universe; we are sinful human beings—nothing more than dust! So, how can we carry out our part of that partnership?
50. Is God’s relationship to us, in one sense, much like that of what every parent does or should do with his/her children?
51. **If you were in God’s place, would you be comfortable establishing a working partnership with yourself?** Most contracts or covenants have conditions. What provisions did God make in His covenant with us? He knew that we would fail. How does He respond? God wants to be our Friend and our Partner. Can He be both?
52. Almost everyone knows something about the Bible and how God came to this earth in the form of a baby Boy and lived the life of Jesus Christ. **But, unfortunately, many think that God the Father is the God of the Old Testament—that harsh, dictatorial Being that they think they see in the stories of the Old Testament. Doing that is to make a terrible mistake; it was Christ Himself who was the God of the Old Testament. See John 5:39; Luke 24:44; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4.**
53. While some of the provisions of God’s covenant with the Israelites may seem very outdated and inappropriate for us in our society, are we prepared to accept God’s offer of grace? And learn to be obedient in our day?

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