



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 13 2023

Scripture Story: Exodus 19–24.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 27, 29, and 32.

the covenant of love



Photo by Jennifer and Company

flashlight

“The law was not spoken at this time exclusively for the benefit of the Hebrews. God honored them by making them the guardians and keepers of His law, but it was to be held as a sacred trust for the whole world. The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given for the instruction and government of all. Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and to his fellow man; and all based upon the great fundamental principle of love” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305).

keytext

“This is what you are to . . . tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.’ ”

(Exodus 19:3-5, NIV)

what do you think?

Rank the following Ten Commandments in order of the way they impact your daily life (1 being the most and 10 being the least).

- ___ "You shall have no other gods before me."
- ___ "You shall not make for yourself an image. . . . You shall not bow down to them or worship them."
- ___ "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God."
- ___ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."
- ___ "Honor your father and your mother."
- ___ "You shall not murder."
- ___ "You shall not commit adultery."
- ___ "You shall not steal."
- ___ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."
- ___ "You shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exodus 20:3-17, NIV).

did you know?

When Moses and the Israelites were attacked by the Amalekites, the Israelites were winning as long as Moses held his hands up. The Hebrew "*ki yad al kas yah*" literally says, "a hand was on the throne of the Lord." Even though Moses had assistance (Aaron and Hur, and a couple of stones), his experience was described in the New Testament in Hebrews 4:16: "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (NIV).

INTO THE STORY

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, but Moses alone is to approach the LORD; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him.'

"When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, 'Everything the LORD has said we will do.' Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said.

"He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. . . . Then he took the Book

of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, 'We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.'

"Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.'

"Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

"The LORD said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction.'

"Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. He said to the elders, 'Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them.'

"When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights."

(Exodus 24:1-5, 7-17, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Circle the different characters mentioned in this story.

Read the story and underline three to five key points in the story that are interesting to you.

What part of this story do you wish you could see? Why?

What are some questions you have about this story that don't seem to be answered in the text?

A covenant is a legally binding relationship contracted between two parties. Where in this story do you see some elements of a covenant? Check the *Punch Lines* and *Key Text* as well.

Why do you think this story of God giving His law to people is significant today?

When the children of Israel were given God's law to live by, they had already been delivered from Egypt and liberated from their oppressors. How would you describe the relationship between salvation (being redeemed by God's grace) and obeying His law?

punch lines

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments’ ” (Matthew 22:36-40, NIV).

“For he remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham. He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy . . . that they might keep his precepts and observe his laws” (Psalm 105:42, 43, 45, NIV).

“This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds” (Hebrews 10:16, NIV; see Jeremiah 31:33).

“Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have taken my instruction to heart: Do not fear the reproach of mere mortals or be terrified by their insults. . . . But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations” (Isaiah 51:7, 8, NIV).

further insight

“With a loving spirit we may perform life’s humblest duties. . . . If the love of God is in the heart, it will be manifested in the life. The sweet savor of Christ will surround us, and our influence will elevate and bless.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 82.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Isaiah 51:7, 8.

Answer the *What Do You Think?* section of this lesson and consider how your choice is relevant to your life. Some might suggest that rules written 4,000 years ago might not have a place in the modern world today. Rewrite in your own words the passage from today's reading. What phrases or parts of the passage speak to you today?

Sunday

Read Exodus 34:6.

Read the *Into the Story* passage. Respond to the study questions provided. As you examine the way God gave His law to Israel, reflect on the parts of the story that might be new to you. Have you thought about why the Ten Commandments would be necessary for the children of Israel? What do you think is the basic value in having specific rules, and why do you think people might recoil at being commanded to obey?

Although the Ten Commandments may seem like "dos and dont's," how does the law of God portray what He is like?

Monday

Read Exodus 19:3-5.

Consider the message of the *Key Text*. It is important to note that God first saved the Israelites from bondage and then offered the terms of His covenant with them (a legally

binding relationship contracted between two parties) in the form of the Ten Commandments.

How would you explain to someone three to five years younger than you the relationship between being obedient to God's law and embracing the salvation that comes to all by faith? What creative ways could you use to describe grace and obedience? What message do you think is easier to convey to a child—the notion that God's grace is free, or the challenge to obey God faithfully with your behavior?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 25:36-40.

In the *Flashlight* section Ellen White extends the purpose of the commandments. She says that they are not only for those who believe in God, but also for those who may come to receive Him.

Read the quote and think of someone you know who models the character of God to you. In what specific ways do you see the marks of God in their life? What are some of the traits that endear them to others? When you consider that the bottom-line principle in God's law is "love," how will "loving people" be a testimony to unbelievers and seekers of God?

Can you think of someone you know who has come to know God because of the loving kindness of someone else? Write that person a note or send them a message thanking them for their witness of love.

Wednesday

Read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* and *Key Text* sections and underline

or identify the phrase in each verse that captures your attention the most. Why? Continue to reflect on the passages about God's law this week and ask God to give you an opportunity to share your insights with someone else.

Thursday

Read Psalm 105:42-45.

In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 27, you will find a rich commentary on the law of God and the purpose He had for His people to bless the world. As you read, highlight the parts of your reading that convey a new insight to you.

Friday

Read Hebrews 10:16 and Jeremiah 31:33.

It's not difficult to be overwhelmed by a list of rules to obey and miss the ultimate purpose for their existence. It seems clear that God gave the law to orient His children toward the abundant life of loving relationships and to detour them away from disappointment and destruction. But it is not enough to simply hear and know what God proclaims as the way to a fruitful life; we must find a way to integrate those principles into our lives. How you might put God's laws in your heart and mind?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 27, 29, and 32.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.