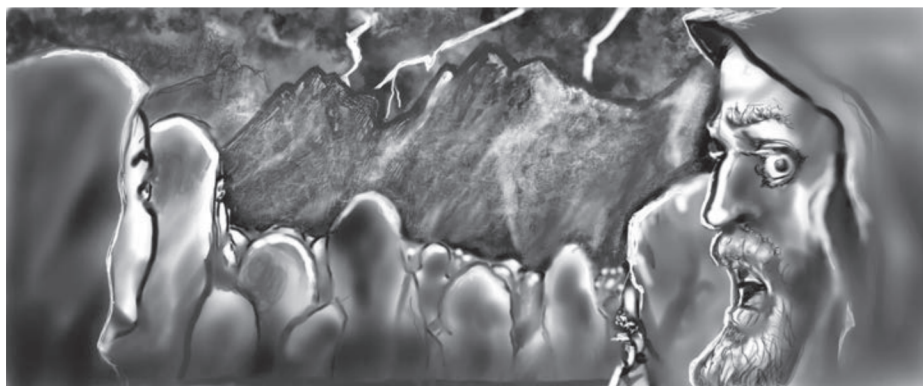


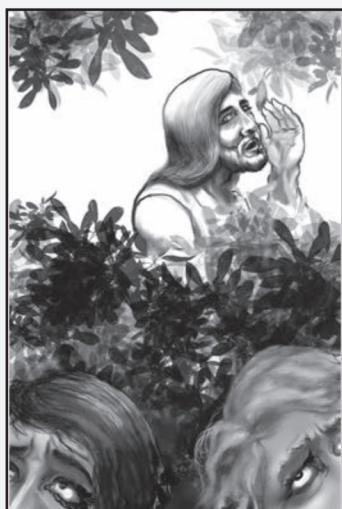
# Promise at Sinai



## 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, NlrV).



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)**

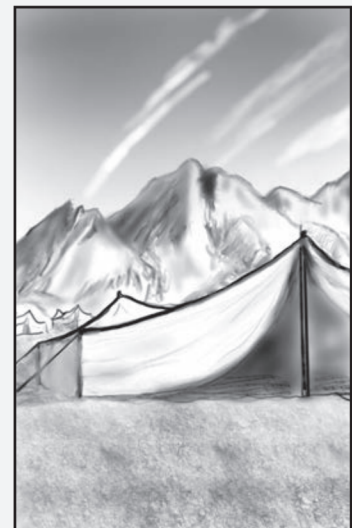
**What did God promise His people at Sinai? Read Exodus 19:1–8.**

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.

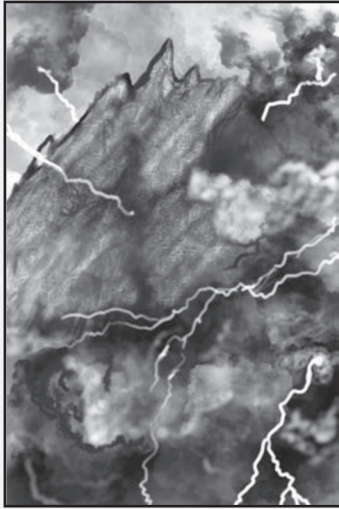
What does it mean to be a holy people? To be a holy people means to give yourself fully to God and to serve Him with all your heart. To be a holy people means to show God's love and mercy to other people. God wanted Israel to be a kingdom of priests who would help other people meet God. As a kingdom 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.**

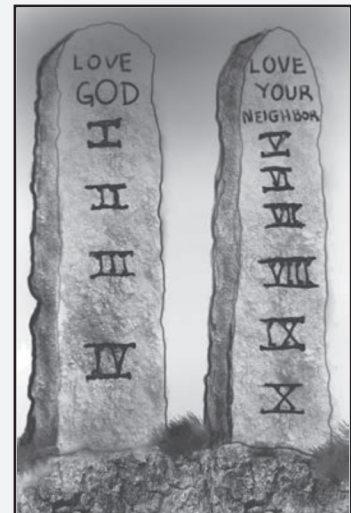
Do you see that the chapter on the Ten Commandments doesn't start with the commands? The chapter starts with the loving things God did for His people: " 'I am the Lord your God. I brought you out of the land of Egypt where you were slaves' " (Exodus 20:2, ICB). Before the Lord tells Israel His plans 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?

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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.**

**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.



**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

**E**niah 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.**