

# The Agreement and the Law of God



## SABBATH—MAY 15

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 56:7; Hebrews 2:9; Deuteronomy 4:13; Amos 3:3; Genesis 18:19.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘So remember that the **LORD** your God is the only God, and you can trust him! He keeps his agreement. He shows his love and kindness [thoughtfulness] to all people who love him and obey his commands. He continues to show his love and kindness through a thousand generations [groups of people born and living at the same times]’ ” (Deuteronomy 7:9, ERV).



God will give us a safe road to travel on our spiritual walk in life.

**PSALM 23** is a beautiful poem about our Savior. Our Savior leads us the same as a shepherd leads his sheep. One of the most important verses in Psalm 23 is Psalm 23:3. In this verse, David shows us **where** God wants to lead us: “He leads me **in the way of living right with Himself**” (Psalm 23:3, NLV, boldface added). God is perfect. He cannot sin or do wrong. So, He will not lead us the wrong way. God will give us a safe road to travel on our spiritual walk in life.

What is this safe road that God leads us down? The writer of another psalm answers this question in a prayer: “Make [help] me walk **in the path [road; a word picture for obeying God] of Your Word [law]**” (Psalm 119:35, NLV, boldface added). Later, the writer adds, “All of Your Word [law] is right and good” (Psalm 119:172, NLV). The answer to our question at the beginning of this paragraph is: the law of God. The law is a safe road for us to walk in life.

This week, our lesson is about the law of God. We will learn why the law is important in the Sinai agreement.

## GOD CHOOSES ISRAEL (Deuteronomy 7:7)

A Jewish story from long ago tells us why God made His agreement with Israel. The story says that God offered His agreement to the people of other countries first. But these countries rejected the offer from God. So, God offered His agreement to Israel. The Bible does not show us any proof for this idea. But the story helps us understand an important Bible truth about the choice God makes. God chooses Israel not because of anything Israel does to earn the love or favor of God. Israel does not do anything that makes them worthy of being the people of God. The Israelites are few in number. They are slaves when God chooses them. They are not a strong country. Plus, their religion, art, and other ways of life are not important to other people living at the time. So, God chooses Israel because God loves them and shows them His mercy.

**We need to be careful when we study this idea about the choice of God. If we are not careful, we can end up misunderstanding important Bible truth about God Himself. So, we must ask ourselves the right questions to help us understand the choice God makes. What does God choose Israel for? Does God choose Israel because He wants to save only them and no one else on earth? Or does God choose Israel to help Him offer the people on earth the gift of mercy that God offers Israel first? How do the verses below help us to understand the answers to these questions?**

Exodus 19:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 56:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 2:9 \_\_\_\_\_

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that God chose us to share special Bible truth, the same as He chose Israel. God chose our church to share the messages of the three angels. We believe that we have a message no one else has. In this way, we are the same as Israel in Bible times. God gave Israel a special message to share with everyone on earth. Today, God chooses our church to do the same thing.

**What can you do to help finish the work that God gave our church to do on this earth?**



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## THE NEED FOR RULES (Deuteronomy 4:13)

**“He announced his covenant [agreement] to you. That covenant [agreement] is the Ten Commandments. He commanded you to obey them. Then he wrote them down on two stone tablets [pieces of stone]” (Deuteronomy 4:13, NIrV).**



**Rules are so important to our partnerships with other people.**

We know by now that we cannot earn the favor or love of God. His love, mercy, and forgiveness are gifts that He freely gives us. We accept these gifts by faith. But do the mercy and favor of God give us an excuse to disobey Him just because we cannot earn His love? Not at all! As we will see, the law of God and the mercy that God offers us in His agreement belong together. They cannot be separated.

**Read Deuteronomy 4:13 above. How does this verse show us that the law and the agreement are closely connected? How important is the law of God to His agreement?**

The things we already know about Bible agreements show us that the law of God is a very important part of these agreements. We also know that a Bible agreement is a friendship or partnership between God and His people. Partnerships are close connections between people who work together. Good partnerships need rules. How long will a marriage, friendship, or business partnership continue if no one follows any rules? Think about all the things that can go wrong: the husband decides to have a girlfriend. A friend decides to help himself to the money in the wallet of his friend. One business partner invites another person to join his business and does not tell his other business partner about it first. All these choices break important rules and laws. How long do you think these marriages, friendships, and partnerships will be a success? Not very long, right? That is why our marriages, friendships, and partnerships must have laws, rules, and limits. When we have these things, then we can have healthy and safe marriages, friendships, and partnerships.

Rules are so important to our partnerships with other people. That is why the Bible shows us that the word “law” and the word “agreement” often mean the same thing. (Read Psalm 78:10; Psalm 50:16; Psalm 25:10; Psalm 103:18; and Deuteronomy 33:9.) Jeremiah 11:3, 6, 8 shows us that the words in the agreement with God are the same as the law of God, His commandments, and important rules.

**“ ‘FOR YOUR OWN GOOD’ ” (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13, NLV)**

What do you first think of when you think about the law? Police officers, traffic tickets, judges, and jail? Or do you think about rules, limits, strict parents, and punishments? Maybe you think about safety and peace? Or maybe you think about . . . love?

The Hebrew word “Torah” is written as “law” in our Bibles. “Torah” means “teaching” or “lessons.” The word “Torah” can mean all the teachings of God. These teachings include the Ten Commandments, the laws about behavior, religion, knowing right from wrong, and the rules about how we should get along with other people. The word “Torah” also means all the wise advice God gives His people. This advice helps us live better spiritual lives and have good health. That is why the writer of Psalm 1 says that God blesses the people who “love the LORD’s teachings and think about them day and night” (Psalm 1:2, ERV).

The law or Torah is the teachings that Moses wrote in the first five books of the Bible. These teachings became a part of the agreement God made with Israel. As we read these teachings, we see that God gave His people laws for all parts of their lives. The law shows the Israelites how to plant crops, run their government, get along with each other, and worship God.

**Why do you think God gives so many laws to Israel? (Read Deuteronomy 10:13 for the answer.) In what ways are these for the “good” of Israel? (ERV).**

God gave His people the law to show them how to live the new life He wanted them to have with Him. The law shows each member of the agreement the plan of God for his or her life. As each person obeys the law, he or she comes to understand God more fully.

The law also shows Israel that they cannot follow the lifestyles of other countries around them. Israel is a holy people of God and His special treasure. They are a kingdom of religious leaders. Israel can continue to be these things only by their obedience to the law God gives them for all parts of their lives.

**God also has given Seventh-day Adventists advice for every part of life. Why should we see this advice as a gift from God and not something that will destroy our freedom?**



**The law shows the Israelites how to plant crops, run their government, get along with each other, and worship God.**

**GOD AND HIS LAW NEVER CHANGE (Malachi 3:6)**

**God is the One who made the earth. He also is our King and Leader.**

**The law of God is part of His agreement with His people. What Bible truth about God does the law show us? (Read Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17 for the answer.)**

The law of God shows us His plan for our lives (read Psalm 40:8). The law also shows us who God is. The law shows us His love and holy life. The law shows us that God is fair and kind. So, we can be thankful that the law is included in our agreement with God. Everything about the law shows us that we can trust God fully. All things on earth and in heaven are controlled by the law of God. This information helps us to feel safe and free.

We know that “we can trust God and depend on Him. Why? Because He is a God of law. His plan for our lives and His law are in perfect agreement with each other. God says something is right and good only because it really is right and good. So, we can trust that the law of God is reasonable. God does not change. So, His law is the most dependable thing in heaven and on earth.”—Walter R. Beach, *Dimensions in Salvation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1963), page 143, adapted.

**The law cannot save us from sin. So, why does God make the law part of His agreement? (Hint: read Amos 3:3.)**

There must be peace and agreement between the people in a partnership. That is why the law is necessary for our happiness. We must have law so that we can live in peace with God. God is the One who made the earth. He also is our King and Leader. His law shows us His plan for our lives. His holy law also is the set of laws for His government in all heaven and on earth. The job of the law of God is not to save us. The law shows us what we owe God (commandments 1–4) and what we owe each other (commandments 5–10). The law shows us the way God wants us to live so that we will be happy. The law does not permit Israel to follow their own ideas about how to live a happy life. The reason for the agreement is the same now as it was in the days of Israel during Bible times. The person who enters the agreement with God is changed fully by His mercy and forgiveness. Then this person lives at peace with the plan of God for his or her life.

## IF . . . (Genesis 18:19)

Look up the verses below. What same Bible truth do you see in each one of these verses? What does this Bible truth teach us about the agreement of God with His people?

Genesis 18:19 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 26:4, 5 \_\_\_\_\_

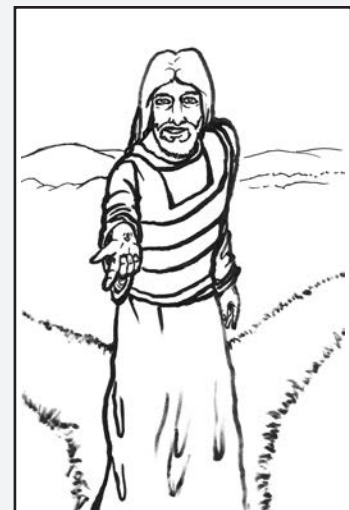
Exodus 19:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Leviticus 26:3 \_\_\_\_\_

God praises the obedience of Abraham. “Abraham obeyed my words and did what I said. He obeyed my commands, my laws, and my rules” (Genesis 26:5, ERV). God expects the same obedience and holy lifestyle from us when we enter His agreement with Him, too. The agreement at Sinai also shows us that God expects obedience from His people. For sure, obedience is an important part of the agreement.

Exodus 19:5, NLV, says, “Now then, **if** you will obey My voice and keep My agreement . . .” (boldface added). Do you see the word “if”? “If” shows us that God respects our choices. The blessings we get depend on our choice to obey. Yes, God gives us His agreement because He loves us. We cannot earn His favor or His forgiveness. At the same time, we can enjoy the blessings of the agreement only if we obey God. God will not keep His promises to us if we do not do our part. We are free to accept or reject the agreement, just as Israel later on chooses to reject it.

Our agreement with God also works the same way as His plan to save us from sin. God does not force people to be saved. God never removes our free choice. In the same way, God does not force His agreement on anyone. God freely offers His agreement to all humans. God invites every person to accept it. When we do, then we must obey God. We do not obey God to earn His blessings. We obey God to show that we accept the blessings God wants to give us. Israel should obey so that God can keep His promises to them. The times that Israel obeys God show us the blessings that we, too, can have if we obey. Obedience does not earn us the blessings that God promises. Our obedience makes it possible for God to give us the blessings He promises.



**God never removes  
our free choice.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “Controversy,” pages 607, 608 in *The Desire of Ages*; and “The Law and the Covenants,” pages 363–373, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

How does Matthew 22:34–40 help us to understand better (1) the meaning of the law of God and the important part it has in His agreement? And (2) the idea that the agreement is the same as our being in a partnership or friendship with God?

“Only the strength of Jesus and His mercy can make us strong enough to obey the law of God [read Romans 8:3, 4]. But love must first be in our hearts. We cannot obey without love. It is impossible to try. Obedience without love is worth nothing. But when love fills our hearts, then we can live in peace with the plan of God for our lives. The commandments show us His plan for how we should live.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, page 484, adapted.

“God shows us how we should live our lives. He gives us this plan in His holy law. God announces that this law will not change. Until the end of time, His law always will show us the right way to live. Jesus came to give honor to the law and show that the law is important to our lives. Jesus taught that the law is built on love: the love of humans for God and the love of humans for each other. Jesus showed that we must obey this law of love and show this love to other people. This is our whole reason for living. In His own life, Jesus was a living example of obedience to the law of God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us that the law asks more from us than good behavior alone. The law shows us that we also must have clean minds and hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 505, adapted.



**In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us that the law asks more from us than good behavior alone.**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Love and fear: both feelings can bring us to God. But which one of the two feelings will cause us to stay with Him in a saving friendship forever?
- ② Jesus commands us, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul [spirit], and all your mind’ ” (Matthew 22:37, ERV). Why is this rule the first commandment and the most important commandment, too?

**Summary:** The law of God is an important part of His agreement. Just because God gives us the gift of His mercy does not mean we no longer need the law.

## THE STRANGE HOSPITAL VISIT

**D**r. Hernando Diaz steps out of the hospital in Medellin, Colombia. He needs fresh air and rest. He has spent the past two hours with his young son, Samuel, while a machine cleaned his blood. Erica, the wife of Hernando, now sits with Samuel for two more hours while the machine finishes its job.

Hernando is very tired. He sits on a bench near a water fountain outside the hospital. He turns on a sermon on his cell phone and starts to watch it. Seconds later, a stranger asks Hernando if he may sit on the bench, too. Hernando nods. Just then the cell phone of the stranger rings.

The stranger is angry at the caller. He tells the person on the phone some awful news. "I have decided to kill myself. I have not found a job in two years. I do not want to live anymore. Do not call me again!"

The man acts as if Hernando is not on the bench next to him. But when the man ends the phone call, he says to Hernando, "Is that a Christian preacher you are watching?"

"Yes," Hernando says. "I heard that you want to end your life."

"Yes, that is what I want to do," the man answers. "I cannot live with this hopeless feeling anymore."

"I think that someone sent you to sit here with me," Hernando says, "You need help. Do you want someone to help you?"

"Yes, I do."

Hernando asks, "What do you do for a living?"

"I am an accountant. I have a family that I cannot support," the man tells him.

"If someone tells you 'I can help you, supply your needs, and give you hope for a better future,' will you accept the offer?"

"Of course!"

Hernando tells the man about Jesus. The man gives his heart to Jesus right there. Hernando encourages the man to trust God to help him find a job. The next day, Hernando sits on the same bench. Soon he sees the man looking for him.

"Guess what!" the man says. "Someone called me and offered me a job! I feel wonderful!"

Hernando praises God. Then he asks the man if he came to visit anyone special at the hospital yesterday. The man says he does not know anyone at the hospital. He says, "Yesterday I felt strongly that I should come to the hospital. So, I did. Then I sat next to you because I did not know what to do next."

Hernando has many experiences the same as this one. During the past five years, more than 100 people have changed their minds about wanting to end their lives after he prayed with them.

INSIDE  
*Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**Hernando tells the man about Jesus. The man gives his heart to Jesus right there.**

