

SESSION 11

GOD RESCUED THE ISRAELITES AND MADE AN AGREEMENT WITH THEM

God did what he said he would do. He freed his chosen people from slavery in Egypt. He clearly showed his power and he kept his promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He also took care of Abraham's family, which had grown to be a large nation of people. This was the family from which the promised Rescuer¹⁰⁶ would come. He would be the man who would defeat Satan and rescue people. This was the person that God had promised would come.

Later in God's story we will see how the Israelites became his storytellers for the next 1500 years. Men called prophets¹⁰⁷ would speak his words to the people. Then those words would be written down in what we now call the Old Testament. And the Israelites would tell the other groups of people what it was like to have a relationship with God.



EXODUS 13:17-22

¹⁷ When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them along the main road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest route to the Promised Land. God said, "If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt."

¹⁸ So God led them in a roundabout way through the wilderness toward the Red Sea. Thus the Israelites left Egypt like an army ready for battle.

¹⁹ Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear to do this. He said, "God will certainly come to help you. When he does, you must take my bones with you from this place."

106. **Rescuer** - the One who saves people or rescues people

107. **prophets** - teachers or speakers of the words of God

HIS STORY: THE RESCUE

²⁰ The Israelites left Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness. ²¹ The Lord went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed them to travel by day or by night. ²² And the Lord did not remove the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire from its place in front of the people.

The Israelites were now a huge group of people. There were probably about two million adults and children. The easiest way to go from Egypt to Canaan was along the Mediterranean coast. But God led them out into the desert in a south-easterly direction. That way, they would not meet the Philistines. The Philistines were a very strong, warlike¹⁰⁸ people, who were very good sailors.¹⁰⁹ God said that if the Israelites met the Philistines and had to fight them, they might turn back to Egypt.

God led them by a pillar¹¹⁰ of cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night. This cloud and fire stayed with them throughout their whole trip. God was clearly showing them the way. Moses was the one he chose to speak his words aloud, but God was leading them.



EXODUS 14:1-4

¹ Then the Lord gave these instructions to Moses: ² “Order the Israelites to turn back and camp by Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. Camp there along the shore, across from Baal-zephon. ³ Then Pharaoh will think, ‘The Israelites are confused. They are trapped in the wilderness!’ ⁴ And once again I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will chase after you. I have planned this in order to display my glory through Pharaoh and his whole army. After this the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord!” So the Israelites camped there as they were told.

God led them to the shore¹¹¹ of the Red Sea and they camped¹¹² there.



EXODUS 14:5-9

⁵ When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds. “What have we done, letting all those Israelite slaves get away?” they asked. ⁶ So Pharaoh harnessed his chariot and called up his troops.

⁷ He took with him 600 of Egypt’s best chariots, along with the rest of the chariots of Egypt, each with its commander.

⁸ The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, so he chased after the people of Israel, who had left with fists raised in defiance. ⁹ The Egyptians chased after them with all the forces in Pharaoh’s army—all his horses and chariots, his charioteers, and his troops. The Egyptians caught up with the people of Israel as they were camped beside the shore near Pi-hahiroth, across from Baal-zephon.

108. **warlike** - they often fought wars against other groups of people

109. **sailors** - people who travel on the water in boats

110. **pillar** - something that is tall and that stands up from the ground

111. **shore** - the edge of a sea or lake

112. **camped** - set up a place to stay for a short time

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Pharaoh heard that the Israelites were camped on the shores of the Red Sea. He decided to bring them back to Egypt to be his slaves and sent his army to get them.



EXODUS 14:10-14

¹⁰ As Pharaoh approached, the people of Israel looked up and panicked when they saw the Egyptians overtaking them. They cried out to the Lord, ¹¹ and they said to Moses, “Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren’t there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt? ¹² Didn’t we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, ‘Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It’s better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!’”

¹³ But Moses told the people, “Don’t be afraid. Just stand still and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. ¹⁴ The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm.”

When the Israelites saw the Egyptian army coming, they were terrified.¹¹³ They called out to the Lord for help. But they forgot all the things that God had done to get them out of Egypt. They were angry with Moses for leading them out of Egypt. Moses told them to just wait and see what God would do. They were trapped.¹¹⁴ They could not go forward into the Red Sea. And the Egyptian army was coming up behind them. Only God could save them.



EXODUS 14:15-31

¹⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving! ¹⁶ Pick up your staff and raise your hand over the sea. Divide the water so the Israelites can walk through the middle of the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will charge in after the Israelites. My great glory will be displayed through Pharaoh and his troops, his chariots, and his charioteers. ¹⁸ When my glory is displayed through them, all Egypt will see my glory and know that I am the Lord!”

¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been leading the people of Israel, moved to the rear of the camp. The pillar of cloud also moved from the front and stood behind them. ²⁰ The cloud settled between the Egyptian and Israelite camps. As darkness fell, the cloud turned to fire, lighting up the night. But the Egyptians and Israelites did not approach each other all night.

²¹ Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the Lord opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land.

²² So the people of Israel walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side!

²³ Then the Egyptians—all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and charioteers—chased them into the middle of the sea. ²⁴ But just before dawn the Lord looked down on the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw their

113. **terrified** - very, very afraid

114. **trapped** - having no way to escape

HIS STORY: THE RESCUE

forces into total confusion. ²⁵ He twisted their chariot wheels, making their chariots difficult to drive. “Let’s get out of here—away from these Israelites!” the Egyptians shouted. “The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt!”

²⁶ When all the Israelites had reached the other side, the Lord said to Moses, “Raise your hand over the sea again. Then the waters will rush back and cover the Egyptians and their chariots and charioteers.” ²⁷ So as the sun began to rise, Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the water rushed back into its usual place. The Egyptians tried to escape, but the Lord swept them into the sea. ²⁸ Then the waters returned and covered all the chariots and charioteers—the entire army of Pharaoh. Of all the Egyptians who had chased the Israelites into the sea, not a single one survived.

²⁹ But the people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, as the water stood up like a wall on both sides. ³⁰ That is how the Lord rescued Israel from the hand of the Egyptians that day. And the Israelites saw the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the seashore. ³¹ When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the Lord had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before him. They put their faith in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

God saved his people even though they did not deserve¹¹⁵ his mercy at all. He told Moses to raise his hand and then God made a dry path through the sea. God is the creator of oceans, seas, rivers, lakes and water so he could make a dry path through the sea. All the Israelites with all their animals walked along this path that God had made.

The Egyptians followed the Israelites into the path God had made through the sea. In the morning, the Lord made the Egyptians’ chariots¹¹⁶ very hard to drive. The Egyptians were afraid because now they could see that God was fighting against them. But it was too late. The water came crashing in and all the Egyptians were killed. The Israelites could see the bodies of the Egyptians wash up on the shore. They believed God when they saw his great power. God rescues people who are trapped and who turn to him for help.

In Exodus Chapters 16 and 17, God’s story tells us about the time immediately after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea. They were in the wilderness where there were no people and no food or water. They got angry with Moses and Aaron and they forgot that God was the only one who could help them. They thought that life was better in Egypt and that they would starve¹¹⁷ to death in the wilderness.

Even though the Israelites did not trust him, God took care of them. He gave them food to eat. He made birds come to their camp that they could kill and eat. He gave them food called ‘manna’ which was on the ground each morning when they woke up. They made bread out of this manna that God gave them. Later, when there was only a little water for them to drink, they started to

115. **deserve** - to earn something by something you have done

116. **chariot** - a small cart with two wheels that was pulled along by horses

117. **starve** - to die because you don’t have any food to eat

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complain¹¹⁸ again. But God gave them the water that they needed. He gave them more than enough for all the people and all their animals.

God kept leading the Israelites day and night. He brought them to Mount Sinai.



EXODUS 19:1,2

¹ Exactly two months after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived in the wilderness of Sinai. ² After breaking camp at Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and set up camp there at the base of Mount Sinai.

They set up camp there in the wilderness in front of Mount Sinai. Remember that God had said many years before that this would be a sign to Moses that God was with him and the Israelites? God said he would bring Moses and the Israelites back to this mountain to worship him. And that is what happened. God always does what he says he will do.

God brought the Israelites to Mount Sinai to make an agreement¹¹⁹ with them as a people. Another word for an agreement in English is *covenant*. A covenant is an agreement that is often written down in a contract.¹²⁰ Another older English word that means the same thing is *testament*.



EXODUS 19:3-8

³ Then Moses climbed the mountain to appear before God. The Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "Give these instructions to the family of Jacob; announce it to the descendants of Israel: ⁴ 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. ⁶ And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Israel."

⁷ So Moses returned from the mountain and called together the elders of the people and told them everything the Lord had commanded him. ⁸ And all the people responded together, "We will do everything the Lord has commanded." So Moses brought the people's answer back to the Lord.

Moses climbed up the mountain to speak to God. God told Moses to tell the Israelites that he was their Father and their Lord who had rescued them from slavery in Egypt. He said that they would be his special people on the earth. They would be his people, and they would be part of his work on earth. But he said that they must obey all that he was going to tell them to do. This would be the agreement he would make with them. When Moses told all of this to the Israelites, they said they would do whatever the Lord said.

118. **complain** - to say that you are not happy about something or to say bad things about someone because of something they have done

119. **agreement** - for two people or groups of people to say that they promise to do the things that they've said they will do

120. **contract** - something that is written down that two people or groups of people agree to

HIS STORY: THE RESCUE

The Israelites did not know what would be in God's agreement. Before, they had failed¹²¹ to believe him and to do what he had said. So they should not have agreed that they would do whatever God asked. They should have remembered that their lives were full of sin. They should have asked God to help them. They should have remembered that sin and Satan were in control of their lives, and that they deserved death for their sins. They should have remembered that only God could save them by sending them the promised Rescuer.

In Exodus Chapter 19, you can read all that God told Moses that the people should do to get ready to hear what he would say. He wanted them to prepare in every way in order to hear what his agreement with them would be. He wanted them to know how important this covenant with them would be. God said they should set a boundary¹²² around the mountain. He said that no person or animal could cross that boundary. If any person or animal did go over it, they would have to be killed.

God was showing the Israelites that because he was there, this mountain was a holy¹²³ place. He would come there to tell them what his agreement was. Only God is perfect and his agreement would also be perfect. God wanted to remind the Israelites that they were sinners and they could not just come to him without his help. If they crossed over the boundary God had made around the mountain, they would die. God always does what is real and true. So their relationship with him had to be real and true as well. They were his enemies, so they could not just come to him in the way they wanted to come. They had to come to him in the way he said. Then their relationship with him would be a real and a true one.

On the morning of the third day, a cloud covered the top of the mountain. The Israelites could hear thunder and see lightning flashing. The whole mountain was smoking and the ground was shaking. Moses led the terrified people right up to the boundary. Then, God told Moses to come up and he went up into the smoke on the mountain.

Then God spoke to Moses again on the mountain.



EXODUS 20:1-17

¹ Then God gave the people all these instructions:

² "I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.

³ "You must not have any other god but me.

⁴ "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. ⁵ You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. ⁶ But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand

121. **failed** - were not able to do something

122. **boundary** - a line that marks an area

123. **holy place** - a place set apart for God

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generations on those who love me and obey my commands.

⁷ “You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

⁸ “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ You have six days each week for your ordinary work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

¹² “Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³ “You must not murder.

¹⁴ “You must not commit adultery.

¹⁵ “You must not steal.

¹⁶ “You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.

¹⁷ “You must not covet your neighbor’s house. You must not covet your neighbor’s wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.”

Moses came back down from the mountain and told the Israelite people what God had said. God had given ten commandments¹²⁴ to the Children of Israel. Later, he would give them many other laws on how they should live and how they should come to him. But these first ten commandments were the most basic¹²⁵ and important ones for them to understand.

God reminded them that he is their Lord who rescued them from slavery in Egypt. He had a right to be their Law Maker because he is the Creator and because he rescued them and took care of them.

The 1st commandment. God said that they should have no other god but him. This means that no person, no thing, no want, and no idea should be more important than God. They should not trust in anyone else to help them or take care of them. They should not trust in themselves or in anything else. If they did that even once, then they would be disobeying God’s 1st commandment and they would fail to uphold their part of their agreement with him.

The 2nd commandment. God said that they should not make *idols*. Idols are man-made things that people worship like gods. Many other nations at that time worshiped man-made idols. People who do not listen to God often turn to man-made things and worship them. Many people spend their

124. **commandment** - a rule from God that must be obeyed

125. **basic** - the starting point or the foundation (for all the other rules)

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lives thinking about and working to get man-made things. If the Israelites did that even once, they would be disobeying God's 2nd commandment and their agreement with God would be broken.

The 3rd commandment. God said that they should not misuse¹²⁶ his name. God wanted them to remember who he really is. He did not want them to use his name in a bad way. And he did not want them to use his name without thinking about it. He wanted them to remember that he was their Lord and the one who had saved them. The Egyptians and other people of that time often used the names of their gods in chants.¹²⁷ They would say the name of a god and think that saying it would protect them from harm. God wanted the Israelites to always remember the truth about who he really is. The way that they spoke about him or used his name would show what they really thought about him. If they forgot this even once, then they would have disobeyed God's 3rd commandment.

The 4th commandment. God told them that they should keep one day in each week holy. This day would be called the *Sabbath*. This day would be set aside for him. In the Hebrew language, 'Sabbath' means *rest*. God rested after the sixth day of creation. God wanted the Israelites to stop and rest and take one day off from their normal work so they could remember God, their Creator. By doing so, they would be agreeing with God that he is the one in control of their lives. God knew that they might get busy with their lives and forget about him. So he asked them to set aside one day each week to remember him. If they even forgot about God for a moment, then they would be breaking this commandment that God gave that they should remember him.

The 5th commandment. God said that they should honor¹²⁸ their fathers and mothers. Later in God's story, it says that God wants parents to teach their children about him. So God knew that children must honor their parents or they would not honor him. He wanted each generation to know, love and respect him. If any of the Israelites treated their parents badly, even once, then they would have disobeyed God's 5th commandment.

The 6th commandment. God said they could not murder.¹²⁹ All life comes from God. God loves people and their lives are very valuable to him. He wanted the Israelites to value human life as much as he does. He said that one person should not take another person's life. Later in God's story, he says that to hate a person is the same as if you had killed them. So if the Israelites hated someone even once, they would have broken God's 6th commandment.

The 7th commandment. God said that they should not commit adultery.¹³⁰ God created marriage as the best way for people to live and for children to be raised. Any sex outside of marriage goes against what God wanted. Later, God's story says that to look at someone and have sexual thoughts is the same as if you had sex with them. If the Israelites did this even once, they would have disobeyed God's 7th commandment.

126. **misuse** - to use something in the wrong way

127. **chant** - a song or phrase that people think will make things happen if they repeat it

128. **honor** - to give someone love and respect for something they have done

129. **murder** - the killing of one human being by another

130. **commit adultery** - sex between a married person and someone who is not their husband or wife

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The 8th commandment. God said that they should not steal. God wanted them to know that they should not take anything that belongs to any other person. It could be money or other things that people own. But it also meant that they should not take something away from another person in any other way as well. They should not just think about themselves and get what they want by taking it from someone else. Later, God's story says that people should think about what other people need first, before thinking about themselves. If the Israelites thought about their own needs first and took anything from another person, even one time, they would have disobeyed God's 8th commandment.

The 9th commandment. God says that they should not speak falsely about others. God does not lie; he always tells the truth. Satan is a liar and he hates truth. So God told the Israelites that they should not tell lies about other people. God knows that Satan uses lies to harm people and to cause problems between them. If the Israelites told even one lie or said something that was not totally true, they would have disobeyed God's 9th commandment.

The 10th commandment. God tells them not to 'covet' other people's things. To covet something is to want something that belongs to someone else. God was the one who had taken care of the Israelites and had given them everything they needed. He rescued them and took care of them when they were in the wilderness. If they coveted other people's things, it would have shown that they were not happy with what God had given them. Also, if they wanted other people's things, it would have shown that they thought that their needs were more important than other people's. Coveting does not just mean wanting more money or more stuff, but also wanting to have power over other people, or just wanting to have more than other people. If the Israelites even once wanted something that did not belong to them, they would have broken God's 10th commandment.

So these were God's laws that Moses brought down from the mountain. God had told the people what they had to do as part of his agreement with them, but it would be an impossible¹³¹ task! They would never have been able to obey even one of God's laws all of the time!

God wanted them to see that it was impossible for them to obey all of his laws. God is perfect and the laws that he made showed how a perfect group of people should live together. But, the Israelites were not perfect. They had been born outside of the garden of Eden into a world of sin and death. They were sinners. They could not follow his laws even if they had tried to. God wanted them to know that they needed him to rescue them from death. He wanted a relationship with them that was true and real. The truth was that they needed him to rescue them. They could not pay for their own sins by following God's laws. They would not be able to pay for their sins with their own efforts.

This was what God was trying to say to people from the very beginning. Adam and Eve were naked and ashamed. Only God could make clothes for them out of animal skins. The fig leaves that they found for themselves were not enough. The clothing God made for them showed that they deserved death. The animals had died in their place. Cain tried to come to God in his own way. But God did

131. impossible - something that cannot be done

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not accept Cain's offering. Cain did not agree with God that there must be death to pay for his sins. Noah and his family had only one door to enter the boat. God told them how to build the boat and he was the one to close the one door behind them. Death was outside the boat, but Noah and his family were safe inside. God was the one who rescued them. They had no way to escape but God saved them. Isaac had no hope except for God giving a sheep to die in his place. And the Israelites had no way to escape from Pharaoh's army by the Red Sea. So God made a way for them to cross over safely and he rescued them from their enemies.

Now God had given his laws to the Israelites. They wanted his help and protection.¹³² They wanted a special relationship with him. He said that they would be the nation through which the promised Rescuer would come. All the families of the earth would be blessed through them. And so the Israelites were happy to agree to God's contract. They thought that they would have no trouble following all of God's laws. They thought that they could do it and that he would be happy with them. But this was not real or true. They should have known that this would be impossible for them to do. God is perfectly holy and he always does what is right. They could never live perfect lives following his laws. They needed God to rescue them from death and from being separated¹³³ from him forever.

132. **protection** - to keep safe from harm or injury

133. **separated** - to be apart from, or away from, something

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1. God led the Israelites to the Red Sea where they could not escape from their enemies. Why did he do that? What was he showing about himself?
2. Did the Israelites have faith in God? Did they believe what God said?
3. God helped the Israelites in the wilderness. He led them and gave them food and water. Why did he do that?
4. How did God show that his laws were important?
5. Did God think that the Israelites could follow his laws?
6. Could any person follow all of God's laws? Why or why not?
7. Why did God give the Israelites his laws if he knew they would not be able to obey them?



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