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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

2ND QUARTER 2023



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CORNERTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 01 2023

Scripture Story: Genesis 39–41.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 20.

life is hard—work!

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cornerstoneconnections 5

flashlight

"God was glorified by the faithfulness of His servant. It was His purpose that in purity and uprightness the believer in God should appear in marked contrast to the worshippers of idols—that thus the light of heavenly grace might shine forth amid the darkness of heathenism" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217).

keytext

"Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.' "

(Genesis 41:39, 40, NIV)

what do you think?

Have you ever had to do something that you wouldn't have chosen to do? Write down five things that you would never have done if someone hadn't made you do it!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now answer these questions:

1. Which of these would you do again even though you didn't want to do it originally?
2. Which of the above will you never do again?
3. Has anything good ever occurred out of a situation that at first seemed like nothing good could possibly come from it?
4. Do you work hard at something even if you don't necessarily want to do it?

did you know?

- Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to Zaphnath-paaneah when he promoted Joseph to vizier.
- Ancient Egypt was known for its architecture and grand monuments. It is possible that the Hebrews who came into Egypt during the time of Joseph were responsible for building many things we still see today.



time, each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own."

"Then Joseph said to them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.'

"Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand—but he impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation."

"When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up."

"Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.'

"Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit

INTO THE STORY

"**The Lord was with Joseph** so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. . . . Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, 'Come to bed with me!' But he refused. 'With me in charge,' he told her, 'my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. . . . My master has withheld nothing from me except you. . . . How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?'

"When his master heard the [false] story his wife told him, saying, 'This is how your slave treated me,' he burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined."

"After they had been in custody for some

to your orders.
Only with respect to the
throne will I be greater than
you.’”

(Genesis 39:2, 6-9, 19, 20; 40:4, 5, 8, 20-22; 41:1-4, 25-27,
39, 40, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Where do you see God’s hand in this story?

What is the difference between interpreting dreams and relaying God’s interpretation?

What made Joseph succeed so often in the tasks he undertook?

Did Joseph ever take the easy way out? Explain.

How did God answer Jacob’s prayer for the safety of His people years ahead of the request?

What do you think it is more important to do—to go where God leads us, even when it is unpleasant, or to understand what God is doing every moment of our lives?

punch lines

“Do everything without grumbling or arguing. . . . And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain” (Philippians 2:14, 16, NIV).

“The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything” (Deuteronomy 2:7, NIV).

“All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty” (Proverbs 14:23, NIV).

“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. . . . I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:12, 13, NIV).

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV).

further insight

“Let the young ever remember that wherever they are, and whatever they do, they are in the presence of God. No part of our conduct escapes observation. We cannot hide our ways from the Most High.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read Genesis 39-41.

Look at your answers to the *What Do You Think?* exercise. Looking back at the text, what two things made Joseph continually stand out? One was his connection with God; the other was his willingness to live honestly and transparently. He was just not willing to change the truth in order to be safe. In this way, he lived recklessly. He lived by a code that compelled him to do his best no matter what the job. In every situation there were things he would rather not have done, but he did his best regardless.

Sunday

Read Genesis 39:2.

The Bible says that "the Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered" (Genesis 39:2, NIV). What does this mean? Can you go through life saying that "the Lord is with me"? Why do you think Joseph prospered because of this? Whose will came first in his life—his own, his employer's, or God's?

Note that he was truly seeking what God wanted for him, and in return he was honored by those around him as being wise and hardworking. How would that approach make a difference in your life?

Monday

Read Genesis 41:39, 40.

Read the *Key Text* again. How would you feel if someone said that to you? But notice to whom Pharaoh gave credit first. He seemed to understand where Joseph's wisdom and discernment had come from.

What would cause people to see you as someone who is filled with the wisdom of God? How often do you take time to listen for what God wants you to do? How does God speak to you? Besides through His Word,

it might be that He tries to communicate with you through circumstances; it might be through people in your life, or the leading of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever taken the time to find out?

Tuesday

Read 1 Corinthians 15:58.

What was Joseph's role in the events happening to him? In the *Flashlight* section it says that "God was glorified by the _____ of His servant." What does that mean? How did Joseph's faithfulness affect how the Egyptians viewed God? What might your faithfulness do for those in your world? What are the people around you learning about God's character from your faithfulness? How does Joseph's life encourage you that it is possible to affect how others see God?

Wednesday

It is always good to dig deeper into the Word of God. Go to www.biblegateway.com and do a search for the words you think are a theme for this week. You might come up with your own list of texts that relate to what this lesson is about.

Read the *Punch Lines* and focus on the last texts. What do they mean to you? Do you ever feel as if you are working in vain? Have you ever felt that you are trying to do what God is asking but can't seem to get it right? Paul knew the secret to contentment—faithfulness in every situation, through His grace.

Thursday

Read Philippians 4:12, 13.

Faithfulness is a question of commitment. Are you committed to doing something regardless of how you feel? Are you willing to try something radical over the next few weeks? Commit to something you know is good for you (eating habits, exercise, etc.) and practice it for no less than a week. Once

you have made it a week, try for two, and then try for more. It is a good idea to keep a journal for yourself in order to track your successes. In three weeks you will have built a new habit.

It might not feel good all the time, but in the end you know it is good for you. It's about making a commitment to something and staying faithful. Imagine how much better it will be to make a commitment to something eternal rather than only those temporary things of this world. See if practicing the small commitments can lead to even greater commitments in time!

Friday

Read Philippians 2:14-16.

What does the example of Joseph mean to you today? Is there a way to relate Joseph's trials and tribulations to yours? Can his successes be yours? Where does the biblical story intersect with your life? Are you willing to enter into a similar type of relationship with God for the long haul? Can you be faithful even when you don't feel like it? It won't hurt to give it a try!

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 20.

**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. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the *Conflict of the Ages* series each year.



CORNERTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 08 2023

could you do it?

Scripture Story: Genesis 41:54-56; 42-50.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 21.

Photo by Luis Guerra Jr.

flashlight

"Joseph was satisfied. He had seen in his brothers the fruits of true repentance. Upon hearing Judah's noble offer he gave orders that all but these men should withdraw; then, weeping aloud, he cried, 'I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?' His brothers stood motionless, dumb with fear and amazement. . . . All their ill treatment of him passed before them" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 230).

keytext

"Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me.' When they had done so, he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.'"

(Genesis 45:4, 5, NIV)

what do you think?

Brothers and sisters can be the best and the worst!

Take a moment to list five things you'd like to change about your brother, sister, or best friend. Then list six things you like about them!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Things you like:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

did you know?

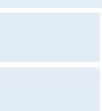
The Bible says that Jacob (Israel) loved Joseph more than his other sons. No wonder they got upset with him!

The Jewish rabbis wrote more about Joseph than any other patriarch in the Midrash (Jewish book of wisdom).

Joseph was in slavery for 10 years. (And still he forgave his brothers! Could you?)

Slavery was a common practice in ancient times. It was possible to put yourself into slavery if you owed too many people too much money!

After Joseph, working on Pharaoh's behalf, had taken all the money from the Egyptians, he then acquired their livestock, and then their land. Talk about *power!*



INTO THE STORY

"Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, 'Have everyone leave my presence!' So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers."

"Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph! Is my father still living?' But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

"Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me.' When they had done so, he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five

years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. . . . Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. . . . I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.' ''

"Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

"When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.' ''

"So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. They told him, 'Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.' Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, 'I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.' "

(Genesis 45:1, 3-11, 14-18, 25-28, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What are the main themes in this story (e.g., forgiveness)?

How much is too much to forgive? Can you imagine forgiving someone who had put you into prison for 10 years?

What did God do ahead of time in order for Jacob's sons to be able to buy food during the famine?

Joseph seemed to believe that God had put him in slavery in order to save his family later; do you agree or disagree? Why?

Why did Jacob love Benjamin and Joseph more than his other sons?

Would you want to exact revenge on the people who harmed you once you had power?

Why does Jacob not want to send Benjamin back with his brothers to Egypt?

punch lines

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins" (**Mark 11:25, NIV**).

"A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense" (**Proverbs 19:11, NIV**).

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone" (**Romans 12:17, NIV**).

"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" (**1 Peter 3:9, NIV**).

"We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly" (**1 Corinthians 4:12, 13, NIV**).

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (**Matthew 5:7, NIV**).

further insight

"When we come to ask mercy and blessing from God we should have a spirit of love and forgiveness in our own hearts. . . . If we expect our own prayers to be heard we must forgive others in the same manner and to the same extent as we hope to be forgiven." —Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 97.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read **Romans 12:17, Matthew 5:7**.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* section. What do you like about your siblings? (If you don't have siblings, substitute a close friend.) What behaviors are hard for you to be around? Could any of those behaviors be your fault?

Without a doubt, Joseph loved his brothers. They were not always happy with him, mainly because of the dreams he couldn't seem to keep to himself. But don't you imagine that there were times when they liked him as well?

What happens when we let negative feelings overshadow positive thoughts about another person?

Sunday

Read **Genesis 45**.

Notice how Joseph feels when he is able to tell his brothers who he really is. What did he consider the reason they had sold him? How did he feel about all that had happened to him in the preceding years? Do you think you could be so forgiving of people who had done horrible things to you? Do you have the ability to forgive those around you for little things they do to you? Where does the ability to forgive come from?

Monday

Read **Genesis 45:4, 5**.

The *Key Text* describes how powerful Joseph's forgiveness was to his brothers. What does it tell us about Joseph's belief in God's plan for his life? What does it tell us about his brothers' sense of guilt?

How do you think Joseph felt about his own act of forgiveness? Forgiveness is a funny thing; it frees not only those who are forgiven but also those who forgive.

Try forgiving someone who has done some-

thing very wrong to you. What do you need to do first? What can you learn from the experience that gives you a better understanding of God's forgiveness of us?

Tuesday

Read **Philippians 4:12, 13**.

In the *Flashlight* section we see Joseph evaluating his brothers to see if they were truly repentant. What were the fruits of their true repentance? What specifically do you think softened Joseph's heart? Can people look into your life, especially when you have made a huge mistake, and see that you are truly sorry for what you have done? When you are forgiven, do you change the way you live? Are you connected enough with God's plan for your life that you can see the bigger picture and not get too upset by someone's actions toward you? How does Paul relate to God's plan?

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson. Which of the verses relating to forgiveness speaks most strongly to you right now? Why do you think that is?

Which verse do you most wish you could share with someone whose actions annoy you? How do you think they would react?

Notice in Genesis 42:1 the humor in Jacob's comment to his hungry sons ("Why do you just keep looking at each other?"). Remember that even though these stories about people in the Bible are ancient, the people were still very much like you and me.

With which character in Genesis 42 to 50 do you most identify? What traits of character do you see in that person that you have and would like to keep? to change? to develop? How might developing a sense of humor help you in strengthening your ability to forgive?

Thursday

Read **Mark 11:25**.

Joseph had to wait decades before he could forgive his brothers for what they had done to him. Do you have in your life someone who needs to be forgiven? What are you waiting for? How long are you going to wait to forgive or seek forgiveness? Do you think the longer you wait the easier it will get? If you were Joseph, do you think you would have been able to forgive after so much time? Perhaps this is the time for you to make some things right with some people in your life.

Friday

Read **Proverbs 19:11**.

What does Joseph's willingness to forgive teach us about the following?

- His understanding of God
- His understanding of God's plan in his life
- His love for his family
- His love specifically for his father
- His pride

Put yourself in his shoes (or sandals!) and think about what you would have done if you had a chance like Joseph had, to command the attention of all his brothers at once. What would you have done after all the hardship you had gone through? Spend some time writing out your thoughts.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 21.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

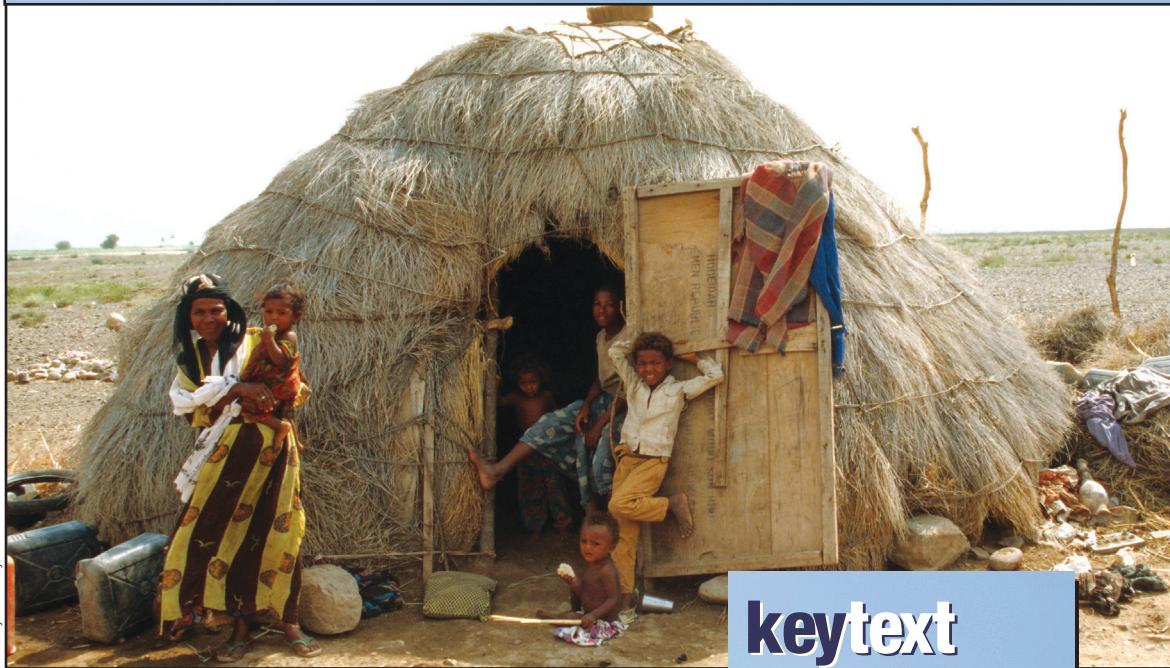
APRIL 15 2023

Scripture Story: Exodus 1–4.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 22.

I see, I hear, I know

Photo by Teraza Bymen



flashlight

"In slaying the Egyptian, Moses had fallen into the same error so often committed by his fathers, of taking into their own hands the work that God had promised to do. . . .

"Infinite Wisdom called him who was to become the leader of his people to spend forty years in the humble work of a shepherd. The habits of caretaking, of self-forgetfulness and tender solicitude for his flock, thus developed, would prepare him to become the compassionate, longsuffering shepherd of Israel" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 247, 248).

keytext

"The Lord said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.' "

(Exodus 3:7, NIV)

did you know?

The Israelites weren't the only people God delivered from bondage. Amos 9:7 says that He also rescued the Cushites, the Philistines, and the Arameans.

We are also in bondage—slavery to sin that the devil has captured us in. God loves us and wants to rescue us. He promised in Matthew 1:21 that Jesus will "save his people from their sins" (NIV).

Some of this deliverance can happen right here on earth; the rest will happen in heaven. But God will deliver. Why does God bother to deliver people? Because He sees, He hears, and He knows what they are going through.



Sometimes people do bad things because they themselves have

had bad things done to them. Keeping this in mind, in which of the following scenarios would you be most likely to comfort and/or deliver the victim from the oppressor if you had the power to stop what was happening? How would you intervene?

A 14-year-old is teasing a 5-year-old.

A mother is being mistreated by her husband.

An adult is yelling at a child.

A boy is being sold into slavery.

what do you think?

We are also in bondage—slavery to sin that the devil has captured us in. God loves us and wants to rescue us. He promised in Matthew 1:21 that Jesus will "save his people from their sins" (NIV). Some of this deliverance can happen right here on earth; the rest will happen in heaven. But God will deliver. Why does God bother to deliver people? Because He sees, He hears, and He knows what they are going through.

what do you think?

of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out,

and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them."

"Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. . . . God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!' And Moses said, 'Here I am.' 'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. The LORD said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey. . . . And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God, 'Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' And God said, 'I will be with you.' "

(Exodus 2:11-15, 23-25; 3:1, 2, 4-12, NIV)

INTO THE STORY

"One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, 'Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?'

"The man said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?' Then Moses was afraid and thought, 'What I did must have become known.'

"When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian."

"During that long period, the king

OUT OF THE STORY

punch lines

What parts of the story are key? (Underline them.) What aspects or details of the story are new to you? (Place an arrow beside them.)

What words or phrases capture the various emotions of this story most? (Circle them.)

What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Place a rectangle around them.)

Highlight the promises God makes to the Israelites.

In the story, identify the reason God cares about the Israelites.

Draw an ear or an eye beside the statements God makes about hearing or seeing the Israelites.

What does it mean to you to have a God who hears, sees, and knows what you are doing?

Why do you think this story is included in the record of Scripture?

List other major lessons that you see emerge in this story.

If you were to capture this story in five words or less, what would you say?

Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God. . . . He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down. . . . The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow" (**Psalm 146:5, 7-9, NIV**).

"The Lord Jesus Christ . . . who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age" (**Galatians 1:3, 4, NIV**).

"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear" (**Isaiah 59:1, NIV**).

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (**Matthew 5:4, NIV**).

"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom" (**2 Timothy 4:18, NIV**).

further insight

"By calm, simple faith the soul holds communion with God and gathers to itself rays of divine light to strengthen and sustain it in the conflict with Satan. God is our tower of strength."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 98.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read Psalm 146:5-9.

In the *What Do You Think?* section you were asked to choose one situation from the list in which you most wanted to intervene. As you completed the exercise, what did you feel? Did you imagine the situation and how angry or upset it made you feel? Why did you want to intervene? Can you think of any reasons that you wouldn't intervene? Why did you pick the one you did? How could you intervene in a way that would bring healing to both the oppressor and the victim? Consider how God feels when He sees, hears, and knows about the terrible results of sin that are happening all the time. Do you think God wants to intervene? How do you think He does it? When do you think He does it?

Do you think God intervenes by Himself or does He do it through people? Can you think of someone He has used? Why do you think God used that specific person? Do you want to be used by God to help deliver someone? If so, pray to God about someone you know, whether they be at school, your home, your church, or in your neighborhood, and ask God what His will is for them and what you can do.

Sunday

Read Galatians 1:3, 4.

Read the story of Moses in the *Into the Story* section of this week's lesson and work through the questions in *Out of the Story*. What do you think are the central lessons to be learned?

As you read, did you notice God's kindness? Is there some way in which you want to be delivered or helped by God—from a bad habit, or from someone who is treating you wrong? If so, pray now for His help and claim the promises that He gave to Moses—"I will be

with you; I will deliver you," and remember, He hears, He sees, He knows.

Monday

Read Exodus 3:7.

Read the *Key Text* and think about what God means when He says He knows our sorrows. Have you ever wondered if God really knows what it feels like to be really sad? Or to be a victim? Or do you think that this text simply means God knows *about* our sorrows? Jesus is God; think about the times in Jesus' life when He was on earth and would have felt sorrow. Take time in prayer to empathize with God.

Tuesday

Read Ephesians 2:8, 9.

Read the quote in the *Flashlight* section. It isn't easy to trust in God sometimes, especially when we want to do things ourselves. In this week's story Moses wanted to deliver the Israelites, but he got ahead of God. God had to humble Moses by teaching him to look after sheep in the desert for 40 years! Can you think of times when you have wanted to do something for yourself without asking God how He wanted to do it? How did it take humility to do it God's way?

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* for this week. Some of the texts talk about God helping with hunger and prison, others talk about Him freeing us from sins, and another talks about God simply comforting those who mourn. God doesn't always do the same thing for every person; He treats us as individuals. Which text speaks most to you at the moment? Why? Claim that text in prayer, and find a way to live it today.

Thursday

Read 2 Timothy 4:18.

Read chapter 22 in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and see if you can see any parallels between the story of redemption of the Is-

raelites and the story of Jesus and your redemption. The first might be that both Moses and Jesus were to be like shepherds, or that Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness and Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness. Once you have finished, thank God that He is the same today as He was yesterday, and that He will always be a God who loves to redeem people.

Redemption of the Israelites _____

Jesus and my redemption _____

Friday

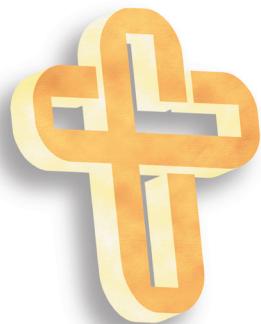
Read Isaiah 59:1.

Have you, or someone you know, ever experienced God's redemption? If so, talk to them about it, or write them a letter and ask them to tell you about it. If you have personally experienced God's redemption, tell someone else about it. Let them know that God hears, sees, and knows what they are going through. Tell them what God has done for you and what He can do for them.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 22.

**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#.URlhF1B09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the *Conflict of the Ages* series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 22 2023

apply the blood!

Scripture Story: Exodus 5–11; 12:1–32.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 23 and 24.



flashlight

"Before obtaining freedom, the bondmen must show their faith in the great deliverance about to be accomplished. The token of blood must be placed upon their houses. . . . Had the Israelites disregarded in any particular the directions given them . . . they would not have been secure. . . . By obedience the people were to give evidence of their faith. So all who hope to be saved by the merits of the blood of Christ should realize that they themselves have something to do in securing their salvation. . . . Man is to be saved by faith, not by works; yet his faith must be shown by his works. . . . He must appreciate and use the helps that God has provided" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 278, 279).

keytext

"Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. . . . The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt."

(Exodus 12:7, 13, NIV)

what do you think?

Of the following items, which would you prefer and why?

To have money in your bank account but not have access to it.

To have a car without the keys to start it or a license to drive it.

To have the Holy Spirit in your life so you can be a light to those in darkness.

did you know?

1. Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem

four days before the lamb was killed in the temple as the Passover sacrifice for the sins of the people of Israel. Four days before the lamb was to be sacrificed, it was chosen. Therefore, Jesus entered Jerusalem on lamb selection day as the Lamb of God.

2. Friday was the day of the Passover celebration and the day that the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed.

Every year for the previous 1,200 years, a priest blew the shofar (ram's horn) at 3:00 p.m.—the moment the lamb was sacrificed, and all the people would pause to contemplate

the sacrifice for sins on behalf of the people of Israel. On Friday at about 3:00, when Jesus was being crucified, He said, "It is finished."

3. The bones of the Passover lamb weren't to be broken, and the Gospel writer John makes it clear that Christ's bones were not broken either (John 19:33).



INTO THE STORY

"The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 'This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.

"The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the

blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. . . . This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.

"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals. . . . The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.' "

"Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of your house until morning. When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

"Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, "What does this ceremony mean to you?" then tell them, "It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.' Then the people bowed down and worshiped. The Israelites did just what the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron."

(Exodus 12:1-6, 11-13, 21-28, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

punch lines

What parts of the story are key? (Underline them.)

What aspects or details of the story are new to you? (Place an arrow beside them.)

What words or phrases capture the various emotions of this story most? (Circle them.)

What is the significance of blood? (See Genesis 9:4–6.)

Why do you think the instruction to apply the blood is given so carefully?

What emerges as the central lesson of this story? In other words, why do you think it is included in the record of Scripture?

What other lessons can be gained from it?

If you were to capture this story in five words or less, what would you say?

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28, NIV).

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" (Romans 5:8, 9, NIV).

"Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7, 8, NIV).

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7, NIV).

"And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore" (Hebrews 13:12, 13, NIV).

"Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (Revelation 1:5, NIV).

further insight

"In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 59.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read Matthew 26:28.

In the *What Do You Think?* section you were asked to choose between having lots of something useless, or lots of something else that was equally as useless. Did it frustrate you? Did you think about how useless it would be to have any of those things but not be able to use them?

For something to be meaningful to you, you must be able to use it. The Israelites had to do something with the blood of the slain lamb to make it useful; they had to apply the blood to their door. What would have been the point of sacrificing the lamb without applying the blood to the door? It would have been useless.

In the same way, today, what is the point of knowing about God's grace, which has redeemed us through Jesus' blood and provides us the power to follow Him, if we don't let it affect our lives? Think of ways in which you can be affected by God's grace and power. It may be by accepting God's forgiveness, or by showing grace to someone you know.

Sunday

Read Revelation 1:5.

Read the story of Moses in the *Into the Story* section. Work through the study questions in *Out of the Story*. After that, *circle in red* all the parts of the story in which you can see symbols of Christ.

Also, on the following lines, write what you think this story can teach you about your salvation and the way in which Christ's blood works for you. Don't forget where the blood had to come from and what it cost!

Monday

Read Revelation 3:20.

The *Key Text* this week is filled with many symbols; one of the most interesting is the way in which the blood is to be applied to the door of the house. What do you think this door means? From today's reading consider what a door does, how it allows access. There it talks about each person having to open their door to the Lord. What, then, do you think it means to have the blood of the Lamb on your door? What changed for the Israelites when they had the blood of the lamb on their door? How do you think it makes a difference if you apply or don't apply the blood to your door? Another symbol in the *Key Text* is that of the blood. Look through the *Punch Lines* for texts about what the blood does for those who have it on their door.

Tuesday

Read Romans 5:8, 9.

In the *Flashlight* section Ellen White reminds us that for the blood to do anything for us we must do with it what we have been told to do! The quote is really quite understandable. What is your reaction to it? When you consider that it was God's love that gave you His own blood in such a gracious way, how does that make you feel? Remember, God won't ask you to do anything He hasn't first done for you, that He doesn't know is best for you, or that He can't help you do.

How do you see yourself applying the blood to your doorposts?

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* for this week are all about the blood of Christ. In these verses there are different things that the blood does for us. *Circle* all the action words. Thank God in prayer for the way the blood works in your life. Thank Him for the grace He makes available to you.

Thursday

Read 1 John 1:7.

Eden Ahbez, an American songwriter, once said: "The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return." Christ gave His blood as a loving sacrifice for you to use, and all He desires is that you will love in return, both Him and everyone here on earth. To apply the blood of Christ to your door means to be loved and love in return. Today, how will you love? Whom will you love? And why will you love?

Friday

Read 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8.

God has made full provision for us to be saved; we are headed for heaven when we turn to Him, take His provision, and start moving in that direction. In this week's lesson we have been looking at the blood God has graciously provided us for our salvation—the blood forgives, cleans, and restores. It is only by His blood that we are saved, but by His grace He has provided us His Word, and the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter.

Talk with a parent, teacher, or friend and ask them what they appreciate most about the gifts God has given them for salvation.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 23 and 24.

**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#.URlnF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERTSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 29 2023

faith first?

Scripture Story: Exodus 12:34-51; 13-15.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 25.

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flashlight

"Moses was greatly troubled that his people should manifest so little faith in God, notwithstanding they had repeatedly witnessed the manifestation of His power in their behalf. How could they charge upon him the dangers and difficulties of their situation, when he had followed the express command of God? True, there was no possibility of deliverance unless God Himself should interpose for their release; but having been brought into this position in obedience to the divine direction, Moses felt no fear of the consequences" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 284).

keytext

"Moses answered the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.' "

(Exodus 14:13, 14, NIV)

did you know?

After God buried the Egyptians in the Red Sea, the Israelites sang the song of deliverance (Exodus 15:1-18). Many scholars attribute this magnificent piece of poetry to Moses. For many generations to come, God's people would sing this song. It is also associated with the final triumph of the church in the book of Revelation (e.g., compare Exodus 15:3 with Revelation 19:11). Some suggest that this is the oldest recorded song in the world.

what do you think?

In your opinion, which of the following scenarios would test your faith the most? Which one would test your faith the least? Explain why.

1. The financial officer of your Christian school has informed you that you need to pay your bill in order to stay in school. You believe that God wants you to receive a Christian education, but you have no idea how to get the money to pay for it.
2. You struggle with a destructive addiction. Your friend says that if you "have more faith" God will deliver you from the habit.
3. You are convicted about the importance of having an hour of quiet time with God each day, but you are also behind in your schoolwork.
4. You are the victim of a malicious rumor at school. When you get a chance to get even, you wrestle with the tension of taking the matter into your own hands or trusting God to bring justice to the situation.
5. Your boyfriend/girlfriend is pressuring you to violate God's law. If you stay true to God, you might lose your friend.

INTO THE STORY

"When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, 'What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!' So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him."

"As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, "Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians"? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!'

"Moses answered the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.'"

"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

"The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea."

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.' Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea."

"But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant."

(Exodus 14:5, 6, 10-14, 21-23, 26, 27, 29-31, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

If you were preparing to teach this story to first graders, what key spiritual lessons would you emphasize?

Find a map of the ancient world and trace the path of the Israelites out of Egypt into the desert.

What one word would you choose to describe the attitude of the following characters in the story?

Pharaoh: _____

Moses: _____

The Israelites: _____

God: _____

Circle any words or phrases in the text that capture the emotions in the story.

From God's perspective, what is the primary lesson that you believe He was trying to teach His people through this experience?

"Israel had to learn from repeated experience that God was able to provide for them. God has preserved these examples in the Bible so that we can learn to trust him the first time. By focusing on God's faithfulness in the past we can face crises with confidence rather than with fear and complaining."—*Life Application Bible*, notes on Exodus 14:10, 11.

punch lines

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9, 10, NIV).

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4, NIV).

"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance" (Psalm 32:7, NIV).

"Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown" (Revelation 2:10, NIV).

"Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness" (1 Chronicles 16:28, 29, NIV).

further insight

"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.

"... Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. . . . Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works—works of righteousness, obedience."

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 61, 62.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read Exodus 14:13.

Identify a "Red Sea" in your life. In what way is your faith being challenged by this obstacle? How is God asking you to step out in faith? Who might act as Moses for you and bring you the assurance of God's leading? Think about your "Red Sea," then memorize today's text: "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today" (Exodus 14:13, NIV).

Sunday

Read Exodus 14:5.

Read the section *Into the Story* and answer the questions that follow in *Out of the Story*. With whom do you identify most in the story? Why?

Monday

Read the *Punch Lines*, then search your Bible (with the help of a concordance or commentary) and write down two more texts that illuminate each of the following topics that emerge from this story of the Israelites leaving Egypt:

Faith: _____

Worship: _____

Salvation: _____

Our identity as a church: _____

Tuesday

Read Psalm 32:7.

Put yourself in the place of one of the Israelites walking through the Red Sea on dry land. Imagine the experience through a

variety of senses. What did it smell like? What did it feel like? What did it look like? What did it sound like? If possible, share your first-person narrative as a children's story in Sabbath School or church.

Wednesday

Read the song of deliverance in Exodus 15. Think of an experience in which God has delivered you. Write your own song of deliverance, then read it to God as an act of worship.

Thursday

Read 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

Shortly after the incredible miracle at the Red Sea, the Israelites forgot about God's intervention for them, and they started grumbling against Moses and Aaron.

In a small group of friends, discuss the following questions: Have you struggled with a spirit of complaint? Share a story about a time when you experienced God's power. Did you find that in time the excitement of that miracle started to wear off? Why is it so easy to forget about God's miraculous care and slide back into old familiar habits of sin? Can you think of other examples in the Bible in which people forgot about God's leading in the past? How can we keep from faltering in our faith?

Discuss this statement by Ellen White: "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" (*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* [1915], p. 196). In

the Hawaiian culture there is a similar saying: "E moakaka ke ala o keia mua aku i ka wa i hala." For fun, commit it to memory. And remember what it means: "The path to the future is made clear through our knowledge and understanding of the past."

Friday

Read Revelation 2:10.

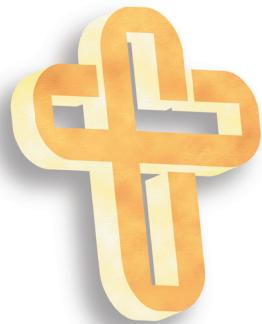
Keep a journal for the next six months. Carefully document times when you sense God's leading. In the future, when you find your faith is getting weak, read that journal and remind yourself of how God has been faithful in the past. This practice will bolster your confidence to march ahead in God's power—even when it feels as if you're walking into an ocean.

If you take that first step, keeping in mind how God has been trustworthy in the past, you will learn to radically trust God. Moreover, you will see God work miracles you never dreamed possible. But—you've got to take that first step. So think of an area in which God is inviting you to take a leap of faith—then jump!

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 25.

**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-connection-books#.URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the *Conflict of the Ages* series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 06 2023

unhappy campers

Scripture Story: Exodus 15:22-27; 16-18.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 26.

Photo by Audrey Goforth



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25

flashlight

"The Lord permitted difficulties to surround them, and their supply of food to be cut short, that their hearts might turn to Him who had hitherto been their Deliverer. If in their want they would call upon Him, He would still grant them manifest tokens of His love and care. He had promised that if they would obey His commandments, no disease should come upon them, and it was sinful unbelief on their part to anticipate that they or their children might die of hunger" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 292).

keytext

"If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."

(Exodus 15:26, NIV)

what do you think?

Fill in the following blanks; compare your answers with those of a friend and explain why you gave the answers you did.

In my opinion . . .

the most trustworthy leader in history was _____.

the most trustworthy profession is _____.

the most trustworthy person I know is _____.

Write a working definition of trust. Trust is

did you know?

26

The word “manna” comes from the word *manhu*’, meaning “What is it?” Bible scholars speculate that the name “manna” may have come from the question. It is described as “thin flakes like frost” (Exodus 16:14, NIV). Each person was to take an omer, or roughly two liters or two quarts.

In the Mediterranean region there is a species of tamarisk that exudes a liquid that forms tiny white grains. People boil it down and use it like honey. It melts in the sun, but it can be stored for

a considerable amount of time in a cool, dry place. It is similar to the description we have of manna; however, the Bible makes it clear that the manna was not a natural phenomenon but a special provision from God.



INTO THE STORY

“Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’’”

“The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’

“Moses replied, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?’

“But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?’

“Then Moses cried out to the LORD, ‘What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.’

“The LORD answered Moses, . . . ‘I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.’ So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

“Moses’ father-in-law replied, ‘What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. . . . Select capable men from all the people . . . and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.’ . . . Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.”

(Exodus 16:2-4, 13-16; 17:1-6; 18:17, 18, 21, 24, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Underline places in the story that suggest a spirit of discontentment among the Israelites.

How do you suppose God felt about the Israelites during all of this drama? What picture of God is revealed in this story?

The text records that the Israelites “tested the Lord” (Exodus 17:7, NIV). Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Compare this passage to Malachi 3:10 when God tells the Israelites, “Test me” (NIV).

The Israelites got very irritable when they were hungry and thirsty. When are you most susceptible to a grumbling spirit? Grade Moses on how he handled the situation as a leader. Do you think he could have done a better job dealing with it? If so, how? What leadership principle did Moses learn from his father-in-law?

What's the one big idea that emerges from this story?

punch lines

“**I am the bread** of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:48-51, NIV).

“**So I say to you:** Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Luke 11:9, 10, NIV).

“**But if we have food** and clothing, we will be content with that” (1 Timothy 6:8, NIV).

“**See to it, brothers and sisters,** that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12, NIV).

“**And my God will meet** all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, NIV).

further insight

“**The humblest and poorest of the disciples of Jesus can be a blessing to others. . . . They are not required to weary themselves with anxiety about success. They have only to go forward quietly, doing faithfully the work that God's providence assigns, and their life will not be in vain.**”

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 83.



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

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29

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).

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.'

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

"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 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

punch lines

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?

'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.

connecting to life

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 don'ts," 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#.URlhF1B09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 2023

Scripture Story: Exodus 32–34.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 28.

God thinks twice

Photo by Tim Adams



flashlight

"The prosperity of God's chosen people was dearer to [Moses] than personal honor, dearer than the privilege of becoming the father of a mighty nation. God was pleased with his faithfulness, his simplicity of heart, and his integrity, and He committed to him, as a faithful shepherd, the great charge of leading Israel to the Promised Land" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 319).

keytext

"The LORD said to Moses, . . . 'they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.'

"But Moses . . . said, 'Why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?' "

(Exodus 32:9–11, NIV)

what do you think?

Indicate whether you agree (A) or disagree (D) with the following statements and explain why.

- A or D:** God never changes His mind.
- A or D:** Temptation begins with our tendency to be selfish and do our own thing.
- A or D:** God is right to punish people who are resolute in the choice to sin.
- A or D:** God's anger and justice seem to contradict His compassion and love.
- A or D:** The best way to avoid falling into temptation is to be firm in your belief.

The above statements raise key issues that emerge in this week's story. Which statement do you think should be discussed and studied the most? Why?

did you know?

- The children of Israel are often referred to as a "stiff-necked" people. In the original language the Hebrew word for "stiff-necked" means stubborn. This image comes from the example of a beast or work animal that simply will not submit to the rein or yoke. The stubborn animal adamantly resists bending its neck to pull the load. You can read samples of this description in Exodus 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deuteronomy 9:13.

- There are several comical things that people have said recorded in Scripture. Where would Aaron's remark in Exodus 32:23, 24 rank?



INTO THE STORY

"When the people saw that

Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, 'Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'

"Aaron answered them, 'Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.' So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

"When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced,

'Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD.' So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

" 'I have seen these people,' the LORD said to Moses, 'and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.'

"But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. 'LORD,' he said, 'why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, "It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth"? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. . . .' Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened."

(Exodus 32:1-12, 14, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

As you read this passage, what words or phrases stand out as pivotal to the story?

Who are the main characters mentioned and how are their characters and personalities reflected in this event?

What is shocking about God's attitude and behavior in this story?

What is unique about Moses and his attitude and behavior in this story?

Why do you think it was so easy for the Israelites to doubt God and slip into sinful behavior?

What do you see as the message God has for you in this story?

punch lines

"And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation' " (**Exodus 34:6, 7, NIV**).

"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (**Luke 23:34, NIV**).

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (**James 4:7, NIV**).

"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (**Joshua 24:15, NIV**).

further insight

"Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts."

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 26.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read James 4:7.

The *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson contains statements for you to agree or disagree with. Which statements did you find were easy to respond to, and which ones required a little more thought before you were ready to answer? Which statement seems to connect with something you are going through lately in your personal life? Reflect on how easy or difficult it might be for you to apply today's Bible reading in the circumstances you face.

Sunday

Read *Into the Story* and answer the study questions in *Out of the Story*. As you work through the passage you may notice several major themes that emerge—which one seems to be speaking to you today? How do you reconcile the anger of God with His compassion and mercy? This story conveys two sides of God's character. How difficult is it for you to connect the two—seeing them as one whole? What other stories in the Bible portray God's anger and judgment and at the same time reveal His grace and mercy?

Monday

Read Exodus 32:9-11.

Read these verses several times and, if available, try reading them in a few other translations as well. What do you think is meant by the word "stiff-necked"? In what way are you stubborn or hard to bend? God seems to be at the end of His patience with Israel. Which do you think was most offensive to God in this scenario?

- The fact that they would so easily lose focus in light of all that God had already done.

- The way that the Israelites gave credit to a golden calf for the things He had done for them.
- The way many of them stubbornly refused to repent when given a chance to receive mercy (read the rest of Exodus 32).

Tuesday

Read Joshua 24:15.

The *Flashlight* clip from *Patriarchs and Prophets* portrays the amazing leadership quality of Moses—genuine selflessness. Read the quote and think of someone you know who is a standard bearer of humility. What specific actions or qualities have you witnessed from their life that demonstrate a Moses-like attitude and behavior?

In the same way Moses interceded for the people, whom do you want to intercede for today? You might choose a friend or a family member, or someone you know in the community who is going in the wrong direction.

Wednesday

Among the *Punch Lines* there are a few passages that come from the story and some that relate to themes in the story. Read the verses (along with the *Key Text*) and identify the one verse that most speaks to your life today. Take some time to internalize these passages and ask God to open up an opportunity for you to engage in a conversation with another person about this story. It may be that you know someone who needs to make a decision about whether they will be on God's side or stubbornly stick to their own way. Pray earnestly for them, and ask God to guide you in encouraging them to choose to be on the Lord's side.

Thursday

Read Romans 12:2.

Chapter 28 in *Patriarchs and Prophets* opens up another perspective into the

idolatry that occurred at the base of Mount Sinai. As you read this chapter, look for the insights that color in the story for you. You will also read phrases that offer principles to live by that can be a source of encouragement and instruction. Ellen White states one principle that is powerful this way: "God would have His servants prove their loyalty by faithfully rebuking transgression, however painful the act may be" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 323, 324). When have you witnessed a young person stand up for what was right even though others might have misunderstood or ridiculed them?

Friday

Read Exodus 34:6, 7.

Rewrite this passage in your own words and try not to use any of the same words or phrases. Reflect on the fact that God is much bigger than our comfort zone, and yet still the God we can have close to us all the time.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 28.

**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#.URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 27 2023

Scripture Story: Exodus 25–40; Leviticus 4; 16.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 30.

making rooms for God

Photo by Alden Ho



cornerstoneconnections

37

flashlight

"With deep emotion the people beheld the token that the work of their hands was accepted. There were no loud demonstrations of rejoicing. A solemn awe rested upon all. But the gladness of their hearts welled up in tears of joy, and they murmured low, earnest words of gratitude that God had condescended to abide with them" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 350).

keytext

"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you."

(Exodus 25:8, 9, NIV)

what do you think?

The following is a list of truths about the plan of salvation that are taught by the ministry of the sanctuary. Rank them according to which speak to you personally (1 being the most, 5 being the least).

- ____ The cost of sin required the blood of an innocent sacrifice.
- ____ The sanctuary is meaningful because it shows how God made a way for us to dwell with Him.
- ____ Every Old Testament sacrifice pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
- ____ In the same way that the priest was a mediator for Israel, Christ is our mediator with God.
- ____ While the daily sacrifice offers forgiveness, the judgment (day of atonement) covers us and pronounces us "not guilty."
- ____ The earthly sanctuary was a model of a heavenly sanctuary.

did you know?

The word "temple" is used 15 times in the book of Revelation. The Old Testament sanctuary was patterned after a heavenly sanctuary, which seems to be a theme in the last book of the Bible. In fact, the original purpose of the sanctuary was so God could "dwell" with His people. God's ultimate purpose for the sanctuary emerges as the crowning event of Scripture. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God'" (Revelation 21:3, NIV). Maybe there is more to the sanctuary than just a bunch of symbols to remember!

Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills. . . . Also I have given ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you. . . . They are to make them just as I commanded you.' "

INTO THE STORY

The beginning of building the sanctuary

"The LORD said to Moses, 'Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.' "

The talent for building the sanctuary

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'See, I have chosen

The completion of building the sanctuary

"Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out—until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels."

(Exodus 25:1-9; 31:1-3, 6, 11; 40:33-38, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

What are some of the key words and phrases in this passage?

What was the ultimate purpose for building the sanctuary?

Why do you think God instructed individuals to give to the building of the sanctuary as their heart prompted them to give? (See Exodus 25:2.) What was the response of the Israelites? (See Exodus 35:29 and 36:6, 7.)

Why do you think God was so specific with the instructions for building the sanctuary?

Describe how you think the Israelites must have felt when the tabernacle was finished.

Fifteen chapters in Exodus are devoted to the tabernacle and the services to be performed in it. Scan these chapters and see if you can identify any recurring themes that seem to be emphasized.

If you were to choose one verse that captures the essence of the tabernacle, which would you choose and why?

punch lines

"Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God" (**Exodus 29:45, NIV**).

"**And I heard** a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God' " (**Revelation 21:3, NIV**).

"**Let this be** written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the **Lord**: 'The **Lord** looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death' " (**Psalm 102:18-20, NIV**).

"**And when Jesus** had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split" (**Matthew 27:50, 51, NIV**).

"**Now the main point of** what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being" (**Hebrews 8:1, 2, NIV**).

(See also: **John 1:1-5, 14**.)

further insight

"Christ on the cross was the medium whereby mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. This is the means that is to move the world (Manuscript 56, 1899)." —Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1113.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read Matthew 1:23 and John 1:1-5, 14.

Rank the statements of truth listed in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson and explain your number one ranking and your number five ranking. What are some other truths or teachings about the sanctuary that are not in the list? Compare the passages from today's reading with God's purpose for making a sanctuary. In what way and to what degree is the sanctuary connected to the person of Christ?

Sunday

Read Exodus 25-40.

What information do you find between the beginning and the end of making the tabernacle. Read *Into the Story* and answer the *Out of the Story* questions. Why do you think the significance of the sanctuary story and its message is held by so few Christian denominations?

Monday

Read John 10:10.

Read the *Key Text* in Exodus 25:8, 9 several times and take note of the key ideas that grow out of this passage. How do you respond to the notion that God desperately wants to commune with people who barely even know that He exists? Is this theme evident elsewhere in Scripture? Where? What does the image of a heavenly sanctuary look like in your mind? How is it similar to or the same as the earthly sanctuary and how might it be different?

Tuesday

Read Exodus 29:45.

The *Flashlight* quotation for this week is a beautiful description of the state of the heart of Israel when God moved into the sanctuary they had worked for months to build. Do you know someone who feels as keenly the presence of God with a heart of gratitude? How do they express their joy in their relationship with God?

Wednesday

In the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson is a list of a few verses that convey different aspects of God's plan of salvation as seen in the sanctuary service. If you had to pick one of the verses given, which one best captures the work of salvation from your perspective? What are some elements all of these verses have in common? If you had to give a Bible study to someone else on the meaning and purpose of the tabernacle, where would you begin and what would you focus on? Why?

Thursday

Read Romans 12:1.

Chapter 30 in *Patriarchs and Prophets* walks the reader through the various parts of the tabernacle service in rich and clear detail. Read this chapter and highlight the parts of the chapter that bring you a new understanding of the sanctuary. Take a moment to reflect on how important this theme is to understanding the gospel of grace. Consider the need to have bloodshed, a sacrifice, a mediator, cleansing, and, ultimately, judgment. How are all these ideas tied to Christ? How do they impact your relationship with Christ right now?

Friday

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

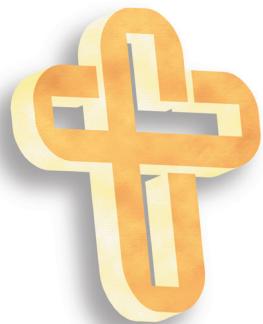
God has always had a plan for our redemption. When sin entered the landscape of human life, God had already made provision for the needs of those on earth. The sanctuary in the desert was patterned after God's system in heaven. It was not an afterthought or a quick-fix bandage for our situation. God had a plan to redeem and restore humanity that is the focus of the work that goes on in heaven.

Today's reading sums up the whole plan. Take some time today to reflect on the work of the tabernacle and what it says about the One to whom it was pointing. The sanctuary simply makes no sense without Jesus, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, NIV).

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 30.

**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#URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the *Conflict of the Ages* series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 03 2023

Scripture Story: Numbers 11; 12; Leviticus 10:1-11.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 33 and 31.

what about me?



Photo by Terri Thomas

flashlight

"Moses felt the importance of the great work committed to him as no other man had ever felt it. He realized his own weakness, and he made God his counselor. . . . Miriam and Aaron, blinded by jealousy and ambition, lost sight of this. . . . Regarding themselves as equally favored by God, they felt that they were entitled to the same position and authority" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 383).

key text

"When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face."

(Numbers 12:6-8, NIV)

what do you think?

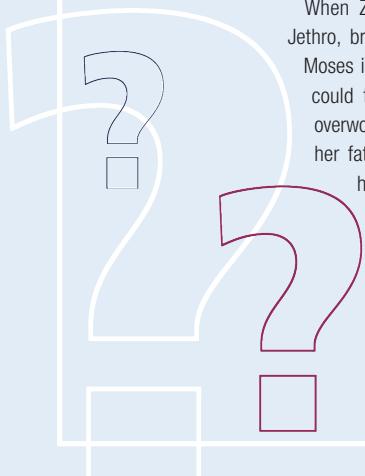
Have you ever been jealous of someone else? Check off the situations that might make you jealous.

- A classmate beats you in an election for student council president.
- Your parents praise your sibling for an accomplishment while making no mention of anything you've done lately.
- Your closest friend starts hanging around with a new friend and doesn't seem to have time for you anymore.
- You work with other students on a group project, but one person in the group gets all the credit and praise from the teacher, while the rest of you are ignored.
- Your best friend is better-looking and more popular than you are.

did you know?

Moses' wife, Zipporah, was a Midianite. She may have been very dark-skinned. She was, however, a descendant of Abraham by his wife Keturah, and a worshipper of the true God. Ellen White calls her timid and retiring in nature, gentle and affectionate, and greatly grieved at the sight of suffering.

When Zipporah's father, Jethro, brought her to rejoin Moses in the wilderness, she could tell just how tired and overworked Moses was. She told her father she was worried about him, and Jethro advised Moses on a plan for the administration of the approximately 2 million unhappy campers.



INTO THE STORY

Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. 'Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?' they asked. 'Hasn't he also spoken through us?' And the LORD heard this.

"Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth."

"At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, 'Come out to the tent of meeting, all three of you.' So the three of them went out. Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them stepped forward, he said, 'Listen to my words: When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in

visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?'"

"The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them.

"When the cloud lifted from above the tent, Miriam's skin was leprous—it became as white as snow. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had a defiling skin disease, and he said to Moses, 'Please, my lord, I ask you not to hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed. Do not let her be like a stillborn infant coming from its mother's womb with its flesh half eaten away.'

"So Moses cried out to the LORD, 'Please God, heal her!'

"The LORD replied to Moses, 'If her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Confine her outside the camp for seven days; after that she can be brought back.' So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on till she was brought back."

(Numbers 12:1-15, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main characters in this story?

Why do you think Aaron and Miriam were jealous of Moses?

Why do you think Aaron and Miriam focused on Moses' wife as a target when they felt angry?

What qualities did Moses have that made him a good leader for Israel at this time?

Does God's punishment seem a little harsh? Why was it directed at Miriam and not at Aaron?

Why do you think God needed Moses to "talk Him out of" punishing Miriam with leprosy?

What do you think Miriam and Aaron learned from this experience? What do you think Moses might have learned as a result?

punch lines

"**Anger is cruel** and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?" (**Proverbs 27:4, NIV**).

"**Good and upright** is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way" (**Psalm 25:8, 9, NIV**).

"**A heart at peace** gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones" (**Proverbs 14:30, NIV**).

"**Resentment kills** a fool, and envy slays the simple" (**Job 5:2, NIV**).

"**Let us behave** decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy" (**Romans 13:13, NIV**).

further insight

"The children of God are called to be representatives of Christ, showing forth the goodness and mercy of the Lord. . . ."

". . . Make it a rule never to utter one word of doubt or discouragement. You can do much to brighten the life of others and strengthen their efforts, by words of hope and holy cheer."—Ellen G.

White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 115, 119.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read Hebrews 3:12, 13.

In the *What Do You Think?* section, you were asked to think about your own experience with jealousy and envy. In our reading today Aaron and Miriam wondered why God spoke only to Moses, not to them.

We don't always understand why other people get privileges and opportunities we don't get. But if a person is chosen by God to be a leader, at least part of the reason has to be that they leave themselves open to letting God lead in their lives. At this point in Aaron's and Miriam's lives, they were focused on their own feelings—feeling hurt, offended, and left out—and not on how they could serve the Lord.

Think about your own life right now. Are you open to letting God use you? If not, what's standing in the way?

Sunday

Read Numbers 12, then read through and answer the *Out of the Story* study questions given in your lesson. Why do you think this story is in the Bible? As you read it, how do you feel about Moses? about Aaron and Miriam? How does this story make you feel about God?

Monday

Read Psalm 25:8, 9.

In the *Key Text* for this week, God explains to Aaron and Miriam why He has chosen Moses for a special role. It's because Moses has a special relationship with God—he is faithful and reliable, and God is able to speak to him more directly than He can to others. It's kind of like God's reference letter for Moses!

If God were writing a reference letter for you, or describing to others what He sees in you, what do you think God might say? Write it here:

Tuesday

Read Psalm 25:9.

In the *Flashlight* section Ellen White says that God was able to use Moses because Moses recognized his own weakness. How can recognizing your weakness make you a good leader?

Think about people you know of in different leadership roles. What kinds of weaknesses would they need to be aware of? For example, a teacher might tend to favor one student over another. She would need to be aware of that weakness so that she could be careful to treat everyone equally.

Pastor _____

Parent _____

Business owner _____

Politician _____

Church administrator _____

Wednesday

The Bible verses in this week's *Punch Lines* section talk about how destructive envy and jealousy can be. As you read through these verses, think about who is getting hurt. When you're jealous of someone, is that feeling most destructive to them or to you?

Now read Numbers 12 again and think about what happened to Miriam. How could her punishment be seen as an illustration of the destructive power of jealousy?

Thursday

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11-13.

People in leadership positions are usually under a lot of stress, as Moses was. In that situation, they don't need friends and family reacting like Aaron and Miriam did—with

jealousy and resentment. Good leaders need our encouragement and support.

Think about a leader you admire—a teacher or pastor, one of your parents, or a friend your own age who is in a position of responsibility in school, at church, or on a sports team. Take a moment to call, email, or write a note to that person telling them that you think they're doing a good job!

Friday

Read Exodus 15:19-21, Exodus 4:13-15, Exodus 28:1, 2.

One thing that Aaron and Miriam didn't pause to think about when they criticized Moses was that they had special roles to play in God's work too. What was Miriam's role in Israel?

What special jobs was Aaron given?

What about you? Maybe you've been envious of other people's gifts without recognizing your own. What special role do you think God might want you to play in your church, your school, or your community?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 33 and 31.

**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#.URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the *Conflict of the Ages* series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 10 2023

get over yourself!

Scripture Story: Numbers 13; 14.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 34 and 36.



Photo by Natalie Weigh

flashlight

"Hope and courage gave place to cowardly despair, as the spies uttered the sentiments of their unbelieving hearts, which were filled with discouragement prompted by Satan. Their unbelief cast a gloomy shadow over the congregation, and the mighty power of God, so often manifested in behalf of the chosen nation, was forgotten. The people did not wait to reflect; they did not reason that He who had brought them thus far would certainly give them the land" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 388).

keytext

"If the **Lord** is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the **Lord**. And do not be afraid. . . . Their protection is gone, but the **Lord** is with us."

(Numbers 14:8, 9, NIV)

what do you think?

What scares you? Write "A" for Agree or "D" for Disagree next to each of the following statements.

- I think of myself as a brave person.
- I'm scared of lots of things.
- I think I handle fear well.
- Fear holds me back from doing some things I'd like to do.
- I'm afraid of new or unfamiliar situations.
- Trusting God helps me when I'm scared.

did you know?

The Israelite spies in this week's lesson experienced normal fear in the face of a very real threat. But they didn't have to remain at the mercy of fear. Fear is real, but so is God's power to help us overcome it. Besides, they already had God's promise to send terror and confusion among their enemies, to make them turn their backs and run, to send hornets to drive them out (Exodus 23:27, 28).

This was not cruel or unloving on the part of God. The Canaanites had learned about God while Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had lived among them. God gave them 400 more years, while the Israelites were in slavery in Egypt, to turn away from their abominable ways and toward Him. When they would not, God had to evict them from the land of Canaan, which He had promised to Abraham's descendants. They would not have been safe neighbors for His people.

They gave Moses this account: 'We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large.' "

"Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.'

"But the men who had gone up with him said, 'We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are.' "

INTO THE STORY

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.'

"So at the Lord's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran."

"When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, 'Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad?'

"They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land.

"That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, 'If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness!'

"Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, 'The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.'

(Numbers 13:1, 2, 17-19, 26-28, 30, 31; 14:1, 2, 5-9, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think God told Moses to send out an exploration party to look over the land of Canaan?

What impressed most of the explorers about Canaan? What were they afraid of?

How was Caleb and Joshua's attitude to the new land different from the attitude of the other men?

Why do you think Caleb and Joshua reacted differently?

When you face fear in your life, are you more like Caleb and Joshua, or more like the other 10 spies?

What can you learn from this passage that might help you deal with frightening situations in your own life?

punch lines

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10, NIV).

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6, NIV).

"The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1, NIV).

"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13, NIV).

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18, NIV).

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV).

further insight

"When we seem to doubt God's love and distrust His promises we dishonor Him and grieve His Holy Spirit. . . .

". . . Let us keep fresh in our memory all the tender mercies that God has shown us,—the tears He has wiped away, the pains He has soothed, the anxieties removed, the fears dispelled, the wants supplied, the blessings bestowed,—thus strengthening ourselves for all that is before us through the remainder of our pilgrimage."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 118, 125.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read **Isaiah 41:10**.

The *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson asks some questions about fear. As you answer those questions, think about fear in your own life. Does fear hold you back? Does it push you forward? How do you cope with it?

Ask some of your family and friends what their worst fear is. Do you see some common threads? Do adults seem to fear different things than teenagers do? What's your worst fear?

Finish the sentences below:

When I'm afraid, I find it helps to _____.

I'd never be afraid if I knew that _____.

Even though I was afraid, I _____.

Sunday

Read the story of the 12 spies who went into Canaan (Numbers 13 and 14) and respond to the study questions given in your lesson. Why do you think this story is in the Bible? As you reflect on it, what do you think is the message God has for you today? What aspect of the story speaks to your life?

Monday

Read **Numbers 14:8, 9**.

Caleb and Joshua responded to the fears of the other spies by saying, "If God wants us in this land, then God will take care of all the obstacles."

Think about a situation in your life that scares you. How could this same attitude help you? Rewrite the *Key Text* in your own words in a way that speaks directly to your situation:

Tuesday

Read **2 Timothy 1:7**.

Read the *Flashlight* section. When we allow fear and discouragement to overwhelm us, it's often because we've forgotten God's power and the great things He has done in the past. What experiences have you had in your life that you can look back on to give you faith and courage when times get tough?

If you don't feel you've really experienced God's power in your life, talk to some people—both adults and people your own age—who seem to have a strong faith in God. Ask what faith-building experiences they've had. How do those experiences help them when they face frightening situations?

Wednesday

All the Bible verses in the *Punch Lines* section of the lesson remind us that Christians don't have to be controlled by fear. Choose one of those verses that you find most encouraging. Copy it out on a card or bookmark and decorate it with drawings or stickers. Keep it someplace where you'll see it often and use it as a reminder that even though you may face difficult or challenging situations, you can have courage because God is always with you!

Thursday

Read **1 Corinthians 16:13**.

The Israelites faced a real threat—a land filled with dangerous enemies. Yet 10 of the spies saw an obstacle, while two saw an opportunity. Caleb and Joshua didn't deny that there were enemies to be conquered in Canaan. But because of their faith, they saw the situation through a different perspective.

What situations in your life frighten you? How could faith change your perspective? Think about a particular fear that bothers you. If you were seeing this situation in a "Caleb and Joshua" way, how would you look at it? Use the space below to write how your attitude would change if you looked at your fear differently:

Friday

Read **Psalm 111:10, Revelation 14:7, Luke 12:4, Proverbs 14:27**.

There's nothing wrong with being afraid. It can be a normal, healthy reaction to a threatening situation. The problem comes when we let fear paralyze us and keep us from doing the right thing. Courage means overcoming that kind of fear, doing what's right even though we're afraid.

According to the Bible, there's a flip side to fear. Some kinds of fear are helpful. Numerous Bible texts tell us to "fear God," in terms of having awe and respect for His power. We should also fear the consequences of sin. Sometimes a healthy fear can hold us back from doing risky, dangerous, or self-destructive things. Think about how fear can play a positive role in your life. How can you distinguish between a healthy fear that keeps you safe, and fear that holds you back from the things you should be doing? Ask for God's guidance and discernment as you deal with fear in your life.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 34 and 36.

**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#.URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.



CORNERTSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 17 2023

the “wannabes”

Scripture Story: Numbers 16; 17.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 35.

Photo by Juan González Nieves

flashlight

“The Israelites were continually losing sight of the fact that they were under divine guidance. They forgot that the Angel of the covenant was their invisible leader, that, veiled by the cloudy pillar, the presence of Christ went before them, and that from Him Moses received all his directions” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 395, 396).

keytext

“When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. Then he said to Korah and all his followers: ‘In the morning the Lord will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near him.’ ”

(Numbers 16:4, 5, NIV)

what do you think?

From least (1) to greatest (10), rank which of the following people and people groups others are most jealous of.

- Politicians
- Preachers and Pastors
- Actors
- Musicians
- Lawyers
- Corporate CEOs
- Athletes
- Doctors
- Teachers
- Friends

did you know?

- **Korah** means “baldness.” Whether or not this “wannabe” had much on top of his head, he doesn’t seem to have had very much inside of it. Today the name is synonymous with being swallowed up and buried alive.
- **Incense.** A mixture of fragrant substances, such as gum resins and spices, used in connection with religious worship. The incense prescribed for use in the tabernacle was made with a special recipe. It was forbidden to use a mixture made according to this recipe for other purposes (Exodus 30:34–38). The incense was burned morning and evening upon a special altar that stood in the holy place of the sanctuary in front of the curtain that separated it from the Most Holy Place.

- **Censer.** A vessel for the burning of incense. Censers having the form of a hollow hand have been excavated. The censers used in the tabernacle were of bronze, but the ones used later in the temple were of gold.

come near him. You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers and tomorrow put burning coals and incense in them before the LORD. The man the LORD chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!

“Moses also said to Korah, ‘Now listen, you Levites! Isn’t it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the LORD’s tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them? He has brought you and all your fellow Levites near himself, but now you are trying to get the priesthood too. It is against the LORD that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him?’

“Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab. But they said, ‘We will not come!’

“Moses said to Korah, ‘You and all your followers are to appear before the LORD tomorrow—you and they and Aaron. Each man is to take his censer and put incense in it . . . and present it before the LORD.’ . . . So each of them took his censer, put burning coals and incense in it, and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the tent of meeting. When Korah had gathered all his followers . . . , the glory of the LORD appeared to the entire assembly.”

(Numbers 16:1-12, 16-19, NIV)

INTO THE STORY

“**Korah son of Izhar, the son** of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites—Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth—became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, ‘You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD’s assembly?’

“When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. Then he said to Korah and all his followers: ‘In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to

OUT OF THE STORY

Have you ever heard this story before?

What part of it was most startling?

Underline all the key parts of this week's story.

Highlight two emotional speeches given by characters in the story. (Circle them.)

After reading this story, what would you say is the main point?

What did you learn about God from this story?

What lesson will you apply to your life this week?

For the rest of the story read Numbers 16:23–35.

punch lines

"All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you. . . . You said in your heart, . . . 'I will ascend above the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit" (**Isaiah 14:11, 13–15, NIV**).

"To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice" (**Proverbs 21:3, NIV**).

"Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble" (**1 Peter 3:8, NIV**).

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven' " (**Matthew 18:1–4, NIV**).

"This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it' " (**Isaiah 30:15, NIV**).

further insight

"Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life." —Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 23.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read 1 Peter 3:8.

How did you rank the items on the jealousy scale in the *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson? Jealousy has a tendency to make people do weird things. Which group would you say people are most jealous of? List three ways that people express their jealousy of others.

Sunday

Read Proverbs 21:3.

Read the *Into the Story* section. Few stories in the Bible offer us a glimpse at an all-out rebellion. This one does. When Korah and the 250 princes confronted Moses, what did they say about Moses? How did Moses react? Why was Moses so distraught at their charge?

Have you ever been falsely accused for doing what God asked of you? (Write your answer below.)

Monday

Read Numbers 16:4, 5.

It is clear from this week's *Key Text* that a really big showdown is about to happen. Korah and his followers have been "called out" by Moses. Read the *Key Text* again to see if you notice anything strange. Did you see it?

Who did Moses say would settle this dispute? Moses had the authority to raise an army and destroy Korah and his followers. Why do you think he didn't do this? How are Moses' actions similar to the grace God gave Lucifer when he led a rebellion in heaven?

Tuesday

Read Numbers 14:20–25.

In this week's *Flashlight* quote, Ellen White lights up a major problem faced by Israel and by many of us today. Israel forgot who was leading them. It wasn't Moses; it was God. But there was another reason that many of the Israelites tried to overthrow Moses.

As you can tell, God is quite upset at the fact that the Israelites did not believe that He could help them defeat the strong nations that inhabited Canaan, the land He had promised to them. After all of God's miracles on their behalf, this is how the Israelites had repaid God—they refused to believe in Him. Ellen White notes that it was this rejection of them by God that led them to level their anger at Moses (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 397, 398). Do you ever find fault with people who deliver difficult messages from God, messages you don't like?

Wednesday

Read Isaiah 30:15, Numbers 16:23–35.

This week's *Punch Lines* have rich food for thought. In your own words, explain what Isaiah 30:15 means to you.

Repentance means much more than just feeling sorry for what you've done. It also means being willing to turn away from what you've done to hurt God. God even promises to give us power to make the change stick. What frightening scene took place the day after Korah confronted Moses?

Thursday

Read Numbers 16:41, 43–48.

Sadly, the story of Korah's rebellion did not end with his death and the deaths of Dathan, Abiram, and the 250 princes. How did the people react to what happened the day before? How did God respond to them (verses 43–45)? What did Moses tell Aaron to do (verses 46–48)? How many people were killed

by the plague God sent on the Israelites?

What does this lesson teach you about the effect that one person's actions might have on other people? Korah's influence led to the death of close to 15,000 people.

Friday

Read Matthew 18:1–4.

One of the truly startling parts of this story is contributed by Ellen White in the last part of chapter 35 of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Read the whole chapter.

"God had given overwhelming evidence that He was leading Israel. But Korah and his companions rejected light until they became so blinded that the most striking manifestations of His power were not sufficient to convince them; they attributed them all to human or satanic agency. . . .

"God works by the manifestation of His Spirit to reprove and convict the sinner; and if the Spirit's work is finally rejected, there is no more that God can do for the soul. . . . The transgressor has cut himself off from God. . . . There is no reserved power by which God can work to convict and convert the sinner" (pp. 404, 405).

May God bless you as you seek to serve Him. Have a terrific Sabbath!

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 35.

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CORNERTSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 24 2023

Scripture Story: Numbers 20; 21:1-9.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 37 and 38.

drama in the desert

Photo by Frank Bondurant



cornerstoneconnections

53

flashlight

"The wilderness wandering was not only ordained as a judgment upon the rebels and murmurers, but it was to serve as a discipline for the rising generation, preparatory to their entrance into the Promised Land. Moses declared to them, 'As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee,' 'to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no'" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 407).

keytext

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Make a snake and put it up on a pole; any one who is bitten can look at it and live.' "

(Numbers 21:8, NIV)

did you know?

It is difficult to pinpoint how many Israelites there were who walked through the wilderness toward the promised land of Canaan. The Bible records that there were 600,000 males above the age of 20 (Exodus 12:37; Numbers 2:32). If you used this number as a starting point making allowances for women and children, the

total number of Israelites could easily exceed 2 million people. How much food do you think it required to feed 2 million people every day? Yet God did it every day for 40 years. What an awesome God we serve!

Traveling has several big hassles associated with it.

If you're flying on an airplane, boarding a train, or riding on a bus, all faraway trips require some preparation. List five things you must do before embarking on any trip. One is provided for you.

1. Pack everything you'll need for the trip.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



what do you think?

INTO THE STORY

Complaints

"In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.

"Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarreled with Moses and said, 'If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the LORD! Why did you bring the LORD's community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink! "

Detours

"Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying: 'This is

what your brother Israel says: You know about all the hard-

ships that have come upon us. Our ancestors went down into Egypt, and we lived there many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our ancestors, but when we cried out to the LORD, he heard our cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt.

"Now we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the King's Highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory.'

"But Edom answered: 'You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword.' "

God's punishment and grace

"They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!'

"Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. . . .

"The LORD said to Moses, 'Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.'

(Numbers 20:1-5, 14-18; 21:4-6, 8, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

punch lines

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22, NIV).

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you' " (Hebrews 13:5, NIV).

"Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me" (Psalm 31:3, NIV).

"Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9, NIV).

"Record my misery; list my tears on your scroll—are they not in your record?" (Psalm 56:8, NIV).

"But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6, NIV).

What parts of this week's story were new to you? (Underline them.)

What characters in the story are most interesting to you? Why?

What complaint from the Israelites are you most likely to make?

Draw a rectangle around the most emotional words and phrases.

What lesson or lessons did God want to teach His people?

What new thing did you learn about God from reading these Bible passages?

What lesson can you apply to your life this week, based on your reading?

further insight

"Nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man could express the Father's love to lost humanity."—Ellen G. White,

Steps to Christ, p. 14.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read Exodus 12:31-36.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson if you have not already done so. What were some of the preparations you listed that have to be made before any trip? Here are a few: You have to be sure that you know the directions to your eventual destination, or be sure you're with someone who does; you must have all necessary identification on you at all times; you must arrive at the station or airport allowing sufficient time to check in, purchase tickets, navigate delays, etc.

Were the Israelites able to make any preparations for their trip through the wilderness? When they left Egypt, what did they pack? Were they anticipating a long journey?

Sunday

Read Psalm 56:8.

Read carefully the *Into the Story* section of this week's lesson. Notice that there are three distinct episodes related here. What does each of the stories tell us about the difficulties the Israelites faced in the wilderness? Were they justified in being angry with Moses and with God? Explain your answer below.

What special comforts might the Israelites have had in Egypt as slaves? Why would they long to go back? Do you sometimes forget where God has brought you from?

Monday

Read Numbers 21:8.

The *Key Text* for this week's Bible study has to be one of the strangest verses in the Bible. God tells Moses to make a bronze snake, wrap it around a pole, and anyone who looks on it will live. Why did God urge Moses to do this, instead of curing all the people with a word from His mouth?

How much faith do you think it took for dying

Israelites to look at a snake on a pole for healing? What was God trying to teach the Israelites about His power and their willingness to trust Him?

Tuesday

Read Numbers 20:6-12.

The *Flashlight* quotation for this week tells us that there was a method to God's punishment of the Israelites in the desert. A great example of this is found in our reading today. When the Israelites were complaining about thirst in the desert, what did God tell Moses to do? What did Moses do?

How did God respond to Moses' disobedience (verse 12)? Was God's punishment too hard on Moses and Aaron? Moses allowed his anger to control him, and he disobeyed God. How would the people have viewed God if He had allowed Moses and Aaron to go unpunished? God forgave Moses and even allowed him to see the Promised Land, though he could not go in.

Wednesday

Which of the *Punch Lines* texts caught your attention? Paul counseled Timothy that godliness, or God-likeness, with contentment is great gain. Rewrite this scripture in your own words, explaining what you think it means. What does it mean to be contented?

King David, the writer of many psalms, longed for God's leadership because he knew that God was his rock and fortress, or his safety. Why was it so difficult for the Israelites to claim God as their rock and fortress? When do you tend to complain about the direction in which God is leading you? What about your friends? Do they do the same? How can you change this habit?

Thursday

Read Proverbs 3:5, 6.

One of the most difficult parts of the journey faced by the Israelites was the trip they took around Edom, a nation that refused to let them pass through their territory. Take a moment to read the sixth and seventh paragraphs of chapter 38 in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Edom lay a short distance from the Promised Land. It was God's will that Israel should go through this territory, but something prevented them from going through Edom, and it wasn't Edom's king who denied them passage. Are you doing something that might be preventing you from achieving the blessing God has for you?

Friday

Read Psalm 31:3.

Israel's journey in the wilderness to the Promised Land should have taken a few days, but it took them 40 years. Can you identify some things that delayed them from receiving their blessing? (For instance, their constant complaining and disbelief in God.)

Write a short prayer to God. Identify anything in your life that is preventing God from living in you and working His will through you. Close by asking God for strength to trust His leading even when the way seems difficult.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 37 and 38.

**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#.URlhF1B09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.