

History Lesson From Moses



SABBATH—OCTOBER 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 32:29–32; Deuteronomy 1:1–6; Deuteronomy 1:9–11; Numbers 14; Genesis 15:1–16.

MEMORY VERSE: “They all ate the same food from the Spirit. They all drank the same water sent by the Spirit. The water they drank came from a Rock of the Spirit which went with them. That Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:3, 4, WE).



“Remember what the Lord has done for you in the past.”

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY starts with these words: “These are the commands that Moses gave the Israelites” (Deuteronomy 1:1, ERV). Yes, Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy. He is an important person in the book from verse 1 to the time of his death in the land of Moab (Deuteronomy 34:5). But Deuteronomy (and the whole Bible) is really about the Lord Jesus. Jesus is the One who made us (Genesis 1; Genesis 2). He saves us (Isaiah 41:14; Titus 2:14). Deuteronomy shows us how the Lord continues to take care of His people and saves them during this important time in their history.

At this time, the children of Israel are ready to enter Canaan. Before they go in, Moses gives them a history lesson. We see this same idea again and again in the Bible: “Remember what the Lord has done for you in the past.”

We are on the borders of a better Promised Land. So, this warning from Ellen G. White should have special meaning for us: “We have nothing to fear about the future unless we forget the way the Lord led us and His teaching in our past history.”
—*Life Sketches*, page 196, adapted.

MOSES, THE SERVANT OF GOD (Exodus 32:29–32)

The first time we read about Moses is Exodus 2:2. Moses wrote Genesis, too. Genesis shows us who we are and why we are here. The book also explains how things got so bad on earth and why we can continue to have hope. Genesis teaches us about many other important ideas and people, too: (1) how sin started, (2) the promise from God to save humans, (3) the Flood, (4) Abraham, and (5) the Good News that Jesus saves us. We cannot really guess how many lives Moses and his books have touched. How did Moses do all this mighty work when he was far from perfect? The answer is simple. Moses loved God deeply and wanted to serve Him.

Read Exodus 32:29–32. These verses show us what God says to Moses after the people worship the gold cow. What do we learn about the heart of Moses? Why can the Lord use Moses in a mighty way, even if he is not perfect?

Moses is not guilty of the sin the people do. But Moses asks God to forgive the people anyway (Exodus 32:32). Moses is even willing to give up his own everlasting life to save them. Moses knows their sin is bad. Moses knows only one thing can remove the sin of the people. Do you see the words written in Exodus 32:32 as “ ‘forgive their sin’ ” (NirV)? The verb “forgive” really means “to carry” or “to be responsible for.” So, Moses really asks God Himself to carry or accept the punishment for the sin. Wow! Moses asks for a surprising thing. But Moses knows the people cannot be saved unless God accepts their punishment. God cannot forgive their sin, or any sin, any other way.

Here we see, early in the Bible, an example of a substitute. Moses, as a substitute, shows us what will happen on the cross. God Himself, in the Person of Jesus, takes our sins on Himself. He accepts the penalty. God cannot save us any other way without breaking His law. Long after Moses, Peter writes: “Christ in his own body took the wrong things we have done to the cross. He did this so that we would stop our bad ways and live right. Because he was punished, you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24, WE).

Moses is willing to give up his own everlasting life to save his people. Wow! What do these words teach us about how we should love other people?



Moses is not guilty of the sin the people do. But Moses asks God to forgive the people anyway.

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES RIGHT ON TIME (Deuteronomy 1:1–6)

For sure, modern science is wrong about many things. (One example is evolution. Evolution teaches that life on earth started because of slow changes in plants and animals over a very long time. Modern science also teaches that life started without any help from God.) The Bible shows us these ideas are false. But modern science helps us understand many surprising and wonderful things about nature. These things help us better understand the God who made nature. The discoveries of modern science help us see that God made everything very carefully. So, we can trust that God is also as careful with spiritual things. Deuteronomy shows us exactly how God is very careful.



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Read Deuteronomy 1:1–6. Deuteronomy 1:3 talks about “40 years” (ERV). Why is this time so important?

Remember how Moses sent spies from Kadesh Barnea to check out the Promised Land? What happened next? The people refuse to trust God. They do not obey His command to go take the land. So, God tells the Israelites they will not enter the Promised Land right away. They must wait. How long? “ ‘ “For 40 years you will suffer for your sins. (That is one year for each of the 40 days that the men explored the land.) You will know that it is a terrible [awful] thing for me to be against you” ’ ” (Numbers 14:34, ERV).

So, Deuteronomy starts 40 years after that time. Now the people will enter the Promised Land. What does this information show us? We can trust the promises of God. God will do what He says He will do. God will keep His promises on time.

What other time promises in the Bible happen exactly when God says they will? Daniel 9:24–27 happens just as the Lord promised. So do the “three and a half years’ ” (Daniel 7:25, NIV; read also Revelation 12:6, 14; Revelation 13:5). And the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14. So far, the special messages in Daniel 2, 7, and 8 have happened exactly as God promised. These messages show us God knows the future. So, we can trust that God is in control.

So far, everything God said will happen in the future has happened just as He promised. Why should these things help us trust the Lord while we continue to wait for the future things He has promised?

1,000 TIMES MORE! (Deuteronomy 1:9–11)

The Israelites journey in the desert for a long time. Then Moses gives the people a command: “I have given you all this land. Go in and take it as your own. The LORD promised he would give the land to your fathers. He promised it to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He also said he would give it to their children after them’ ” (Deuteronomy 1:8, NIV).

Look at what happens next.

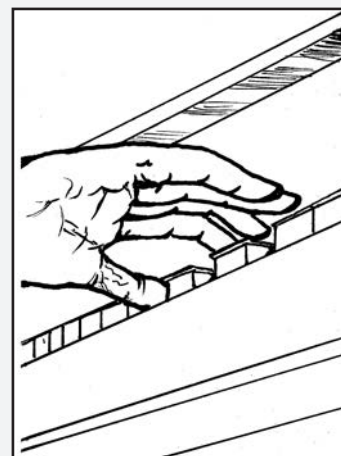
Read Deuteronomy 1:9–11. What do these verses mean? While you read them, remember that God punishes Israel for failing to obey Him at Kadesh Barnea.

These verses show us another example of the mercy of God. Yes, God punishes the Israelites by making them wander for 40 years in the desert. At the same time, God continues to bless His people during that time. Later, the Bible says: “You took care of them for 40 years. They had all they needed in the desert. Their clothes didn’t wear out, and their feet didn’t swell [grow big] and hurt’ ” (Nehemiah 9:21, ERV).

Then Moses shows his deep love for his people. He asks God to add people to Israel a thousand times more than He already had!

God blesses the people as Moses asks. What happens because of His blessing? What does Moses do to solve the problem? Read Deuteronomy 1:12–17 for the answers.

God is with His people in a powerful way. At the same time, the people need good human leadership, too. They need responsible leaders who can judge things in a fair way and wisely solve problems. Israel was a “qahal.” A “qahal” is a large group of people or a community of faith (read Deuteronomy 31:30, NIV). The “qahal” came before the “ekklesia” in the New Testament. “Ekklesia” is the Greek word for “church” (read Matthew 16:18). So, we see a connection between the Old Testament community of faith (“qahal”) and the New Testament church (“ekklesia”). This connection helps us see why Paul talks about the need for good church leaders in 1 Corinthians 12. The church today needs to be in agreement, the same as the “qahal” in the desert was. We need church members to serve God in different ways with the gifts God gives them.



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KADESH BARNEA (Numbers 14)

What happened at Kadesh Barnea is a sad story. This story is the reason for what happens at the beginning of Deuteronomy. So, we should take a closer look at the story.

How do the people behave when the spies give their report? What happens because of their behavior? Read Numbers 14 for the answer.

We can learn many important lessons from this story. One important lesson is in Numbers 14:11–20. We will see this lesson in the book of Deuteronomy again later on.

Read Numbers 14:11–20. Moses stands between God and the people in these verses. We saw Moses do this same work before when the people sinned against the Lord with the gold cow. What reason does Moses give God about why He should not destroy the people? Why is this reason so important?



God wants Israel to help people to turn from their false gods to the only God who can save them.

Moses says almost the same as these words to God, “If You destroy Your people, what will the Egyptians and other people think about You?” This idea is important. Everything God does for Israel is also for all humans. God wants to bless humans everywhere because of His plan for Israel. God chooses Israel to show His love to the people on the earth. God wants Israel to help people to turn from their false gods to the only God who can save them. That is why Moses says, If You destroy this people, then what? The people from other countries will say, “ ‘The LORD was not able to bring them into the land he promised them. So he killed them in the desert” ’ ” (Numbers 14:16, ERV).

The Bible shows that the people of God will give Him glory. God chose Israel in Bible times to do this work. In the same way, God chose the church to show His love to everyone on earth today. God works in the lives of His people to show other people who He is. Of course, we do not always make it easy for God to do His work. But in the end, the work of God in His church will show His glory.

Read Ephesians 3:10. What is Paul saying in this verse? How does God show His wisdom through His church? How is this wisdom shown to people who live on other planets?

THE SIN OF THE AMORITE PEOPLE (Genesis 15:1–16)

In Deuteronomy 2 and 3, Moses tells the Israelites more about their history. Moses talks about how God helped the Israelites beat their enemies when Israel was loyal to God. God also helped His people destroy the giants “known as Rephaim” (Deuteronomy 2:11, 20, NLV; Deuteronomy 3:13).

These verses bring a difficult topic to our attention: killing. True, the Israelites often tried to make peace with people before they fought them (Deuteronomy 20:10, 11). But the people from other countries did not always accept the offer of peace from Israel. So, sometimes the Israelites went to war and destroyed these people, including women and children. Moses talks about how Israel did this very thing to King Sihon: “ ‘The Lord our God gave him to us. We won the fight against him, his sons and all his people. So we took all his cities at that time, and destroyed every man, woman and child in them. We left no one alive’ ” (Deuteronomy 2:33, 34, NLV).

Some people have a hard time accepting the killing in Bible stories. So, they say these stories are not true. As Seventh-day Adventists, we know these stories are true. We believe that “All Scripture [the Bible] is given by God” (2 Timothy 3:16, ERV). So, we believe the stories in the Bible happened. Because we believe, we face a difficult question: Why did a loving God allow these killings to happen?

Read Genesis 15:1–16. What does God say to Abram in verse 16? How does verse 16 help us better see why God let Israel kill their enemies, including women and children?

For sure, many of the people near Israel were evil. God had every right to punish them long before then. But we have a hard time reading about how Israel killed women and children. We must remember that we do not have all the information about what happened back then. So, we must accept this difficult story and trust in the mercy of God. Faith is not just about loving God when our loving Him is easy. Faith also is about our trusting in God when we do not fully understand everything we read in the Bible.

We may see things in life or the Bible we do not fully understand. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1–4 and John 14:9. How do these verses help us trust God? Can we believe God is loving and fair, and trust Him when we do not understand everything we see?



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Below is the view of one Bible expert on the topic of what the Israelites did to their enemies:

“God is the One who made all things, including humans. God controls everything in heaven and earth. So, God can do anything He wants with anyone. When God acts, He will always be right in whatever He does. . . .

“The ways of God are a mystery. We never will fully understand God. So, we need to relax. Stop worrying about all the questions we have in our minds about God. Isaiah 55:8, 9 offers us some hope on this topic.

“The Bible shows us a picture of the Canaanites. These people were very evil. So, they were destroyed. God punished them for their sin. This is not the first time or the last time God will punish people in this way. . . .

“God never wanted to make the plan of ‘herem’ the only thing the Israelites did to other people. ‘Herem’ in the Hebrew language means to fully destroy something. Deuteronomy 7:1 shows us a list of the people God will force from Canaan to make room for the Israelites. This list helps us to see that God set limits on the people Israel may destroy. So, God did not allow the Israelites to destroy the Aramaeans, Edomites, Egyptians, or anyone else (also read Deuteronomy 20:10–18). . . .

“The Canaanites were judged by God. In the same way, all sinners will stand in front of God and be judged. . . .

“Yes, God judged the Canaanites. But remember, the Canaanites were warned for at least 40 years about what is coming in the future (read the words of Rahab in Joshua 2:8–11).”—Daniel I. Block, *The NIV Application Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), pages 98, 99, adapted.



After Jesus comes, we will have 1,000 years to get answers to all of our questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 After Jesus comes, we will have 1,000 years (named the millennium) to get answers to all our questions about things in life we do not understand now. How can this hope help us to trust in God when we have many questions?
- 2 What are some of the ways God led you in the past? How can this experience help you to trust Him for the future? Why must we always remember how God has worked in our lives?

THE FAITH OF MY MOTHER

My mother has cancer. When she is dying, she says to me, “You must go to church.” When I was young, my mother took me to church every Sabbath. But I stopped going when I got busy with my shop in Hanam, South Korea. The words of my mother bother me. I know she is right. I work hard to run my business and take care of family members. But I need Jesus. I decide to give my life to Him.

As my love for Jesus grows, He helps me to care about my neighbors. Hong Soon-mi was one of my neighbors. Her husband has bone cancer and cannot afford the operation. So, I set up a box outside my shop where people can donate money. Many people laugh at me for helping the husband of Soon-mi. “Why are you collecting money for someone who is not a family member?” But I do not remove the money box.

When Soon-mi has a birthday, I give her a 45-pound (20-kilogram) bag of rice. “Take this gift from my shop,” I say. Later, Soon-mi tells me that her whole family cried when they saw the gift.

Soon-mi reads the Adventist magazines I give her. Soon-mi learns that Seventh-day Adventists love Jesus and people. I put Soon-mi in charge of my shop. I pay her salary and meet her daily needs for about two years. I give her fruit and rice every day. After that, I make Soon-mi the manager of a small restaurant that I run. A year after I make Soon-mi the manager for the restaurant, she asks, “Why not invite me to church?”

“You know that you are welcome to come,” I say.

“Then I will come visit,” Soon-mi says.

After I am friends with Soon-mi for six years, Soon-mi visits West Hanam Seventh-day Adventist Church for the first time. Three years later, Soon-mi becomes a deaconess. A deaconess is a woman church worker. Later, the husband and son of Soon-mi are baptized.

When I first opened my shop, I was the only Adventist in the neighborhood. Now, seven businessmen and women are Adventists. People in this area respect Adventists. I thank my mother for teaching me about Jesus. I give all the glory to God for using me to do good.

This story shows Mission Purpose number 1 of the “I Will Go” plan for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Purpose number 1 is: “Pastors and church members will share the Good News about Jesus with other people worldwide. We will show that sharing Jesus is a way of life. We will do whatever God asks us to do to share Jesus with other people.” Learn more at IWillGo2020.org. This quarter, your 13th Sabbath offering will support church work in South Korea.

INSIDE
Story
by PARK YEON-SOOK



I give Soon-Mi fruit and rice every day.

