

# Open Bible Stories - God's Covenant with Israel

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## Introduction

### Key Idea

The story of God's covenant with Israel teaches us how God's people live in relationship with God.

### Core Belief Verse

*"For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it." - James 2:10*

## God's Big Story

The eternal God created all things in six days.

He made a good and perfect world.

He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation.

But humans rebelled against God and ruined God's creation.

God set to restore his world through his promise.

God made a covenant with Abraham.

He promised to bless all nations through Abraham.

God kept his promises across the generations.

God provided Abraham with a promised child, Isaac.

God gave Isaac a wife and she bore twins, Jacob and Esau.

God blessed Jacob and his sons, and the blessing continued to the next generation.

God rescued Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, and used him to rescue his family.

God caused his people, the Israelites, to multiply in the land of Egypt; eventually, they became slaves.

But, God raised up a deliverer, Moses, to deliver his people from their slavery.

God sent judgment on the Egyptians with harsh plagues; in the final judgment, he passed over his people who covered their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

Then, God delivered the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea on dry land.

God made a covenant with the Israelites and made them his people.

## The Story: God's Covenant with Israel

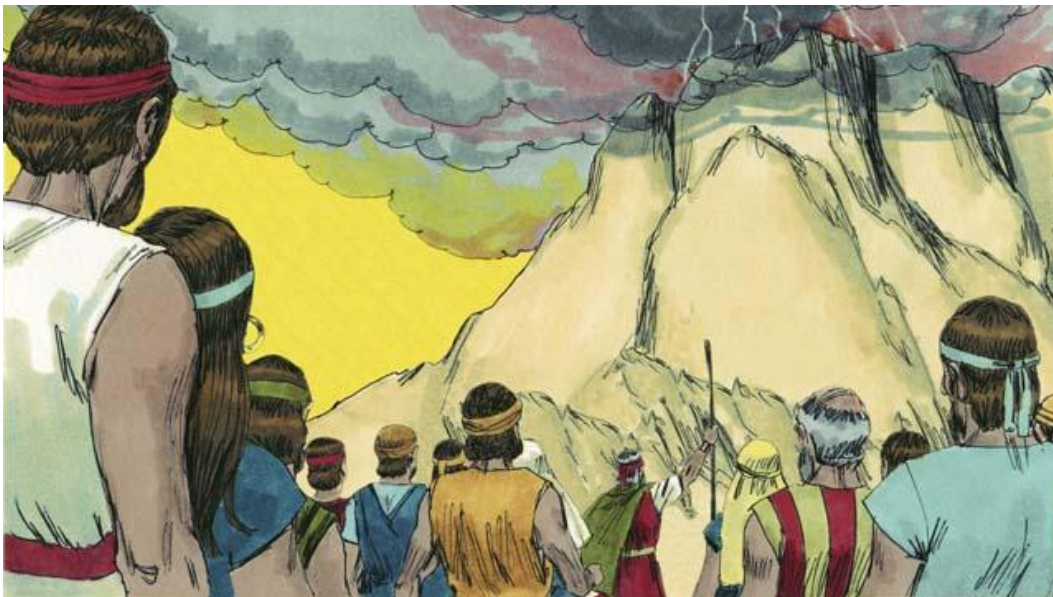
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13-01



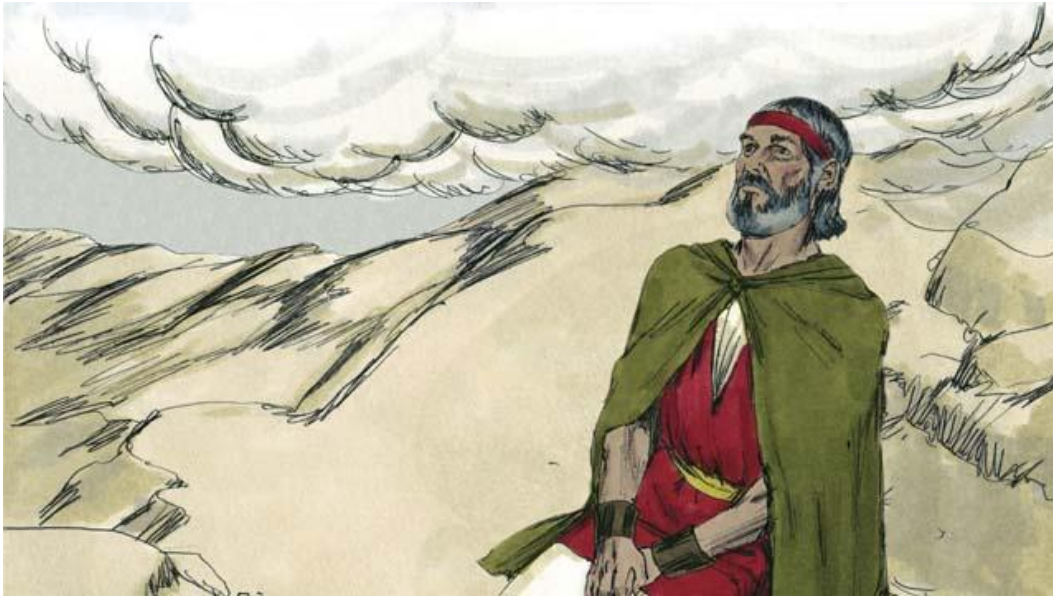
After God led the Israelites through the Red Sea, he led them through the wilderness to a mountain called Sinai. This was the same mountain where Moses had seen the burning bush. The people set up their tents at the base of the mountain.

13-02



God said to Moses and all the people of Israel, "You must always obey me and keep the covenant I am making with you. If you do this, you will be my prized possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."

13-03



For three days the people made themselves ready for God to come near to them. Then God came down to the top of Mount Sinai. When he came, there was thunder, lightning, smoke, and sounds of loud trumpets. Then Moses went by himself up the mountain.

13-04



Then God made a covenant with the people. He said, "I am Yahweh, your God. It is I who saved you from being slaves in Egypt. Do not worship any other god."

13-05



"Do not make idols and do not worship them, because I, Yahweh, must be your only God. Do not use my name in a disrespectful way. Be sure to keep the Sabbath day holy. In other words, do all your work in six days, for the seventh day is a day for you to rest and to remember me."

13-06



"Honor your father and your mother. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not desire to have your neighbor's wife, his house, or anything that belongs to him."

13-07

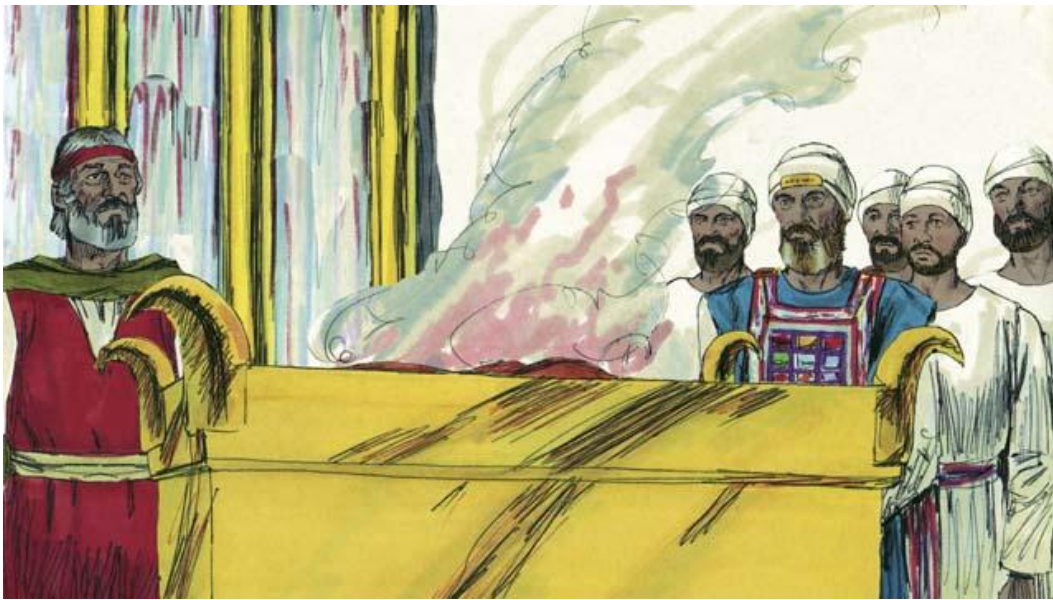


The people all agreed to obey the laws that God had given them. They agreed to belong to God alone and to worship only him.

13-08



God also told the Israelites to make a large tent-the Tent of Meeting. He told them exactly how to make this tent and what things to put in it. He told them to make a large curtain to separate the tent into two rooms. God would come into the room behind the curtain and stay there. Only the high priest was allowed to go into that room where God was.



The people must also make an altar in front of the Tent of Meeting. Anyone who had disobeyed God's law should bring an animal to that altar. A priest would then kill it and burn it on the altar as a sacrifice to God. God said that the animal's blood would cover that person's sin. In this way, God would not see that sin any longer. That person would become "clean" in God's sight. God chose Moses' brother, Aaron, and Aaron's descendants to be his priests.

13-10



God wrote these Ten Commandments on two stone tablets and gave them to Moses. God also gave the people many other laws and rules to follow. God promised to bless the people and protect them if they obeyed these laws. But he said he would punish them if they did not obey them.

13-11



For many days, Moses remained on top of Mount Sinai. He was talking with God. But the people became tired of waiting for him to return to them. So they brought gold to Aaron and asked him to make an idol that they could worship instead of God. In this way, they sinned terribly against God.

13-12



Aaron made a golden idol in the shape of a calf. The people began to wildly worship the idol and make sacrifices to it! God was very angry with them because of their sin. God told Moses he wanted to destroy them. But Moses asked God not to kill them. God listened to his prayer and did not destroy them.

13-13



When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he was carrying the two stone tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments. When Moses saw the idol, he was so angry that he smashed the tablets.

13-14



Then Moses burned the idol and ground it into powder. He threw the powder into a stream and made the people drink the water. God sent a plague on the people and many of them died.

13-15



Moses made new stone tablets for the Ten Commandments to replace the ones that he had broken. Then he climbed the mountain again and prayed that God would forgive the people. God listened to Moses and forgave them. Moses came back down the mountain with the Ten Commandments on the new tablets. Then God led the Israelites away from Mount Sinai toward the Promised Land.

## The Last Days - Guarding Against Cultural Values

- **Key Idea:** Renouncing worldly ways of living
- **Key Passage:** 2 Timothy 3:1-5
- **Main Session:** OBS 13 (God's Covenant with Israel)

### Recite the Core Belief Verse (3–5 minutes)

The verse below summarizes the teaching of the current passage. Read the verse out loud as a community. Read it again several times as a group until the whole community can recite it from memory.

*"All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; and so it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law, and do them." Galatians 3:10 OR For whoever obeys the whole law, except that he stumbles in just a single way, has become guilty of breaking the whole law. James 2:10"*

### Read the Passage (5 minutes)

It is not easy to be a Christian. It is also not easy to be a part of a healthy church community. Many people do not obey God and they live in a way that is sinful and wicked. In order to learn about how Christians should live in a world opposed to God, read the passage below.

*"3:1 But know this: In the last days there will be difficult times. 2 For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, and unholy. 3 They will be without natural affection, unable to reconcile, slanderers, without self-control, violent, not lovers of good. 4 They will be betrayers, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. 5 They will have a shape of godliness, but they will deny its power. Turn away from these people. - 2 Timothy 3:1-5"*

### **Explore the Idea** (10–15 minutes)

Christians live in a world where many people oppose God and his ways. Use the following questions to discuss the kinds of values Christians need to be guarded against.

1. What kinds of behaviors, desires, and lifestyles characterize the evil people described in the passage above?
2. How do these kinds of sins threaten Christian community?
3. How have you seen these sins dishonor God and hurt others?
4. What should your community do to become strong against these sinful threats?

### **Understand Your Culture** (5–10 minutes)

As you think about the sins listed in the passage above, think about where you see these sins in the surrounding culture. Give specific examples. Discuss together how such dangers can threaten your own community.

### **Pray to God** (5 minutes)

Pray that God would protect your community from the sins of the surrounding culture.

### **Sing a Song** (3–5 minutes)

Choose a song to sing to praise God and encourage one another.

## **Movement 1: Understand the Story**

*Read each question aloud. Give the group time to answer before sharing the answer.*

### **Observation Questions**

13-01

Where did God lead the Israelites after they crossed the Red Sea?

God led them through the wilderness to a mountain called Sinai.

Why was this mountain important?

This was the same mountain where Moses saw the burning bush.

What did the people do when they arrived at Mount Sinai?

The people set up their tents at the base of the mountain.

*13-02*

What message did God give Moses to tell the people?

God told Moses to tell the Israelites that they must always obey God and keep his covenant.

What did God promise the Israelites that they would become if they would obey him?

They would be his prized possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

*13-03*

How many days did the people make themselves ready for God to come near to them?

The people made themselves ready for three days.

What signs accompanied God when he came down on Mount Sinai?

Thunder, lightning, smoke, and a loud trumpet blast accompanied God when he came down.

Who went up to the mountain?

Moses went by himself up to the mountain.

*13-04*

What did God say to the Israelites when he made a covenant with them?

God told the Israelites that he was Yahweh, their God. God told them that he was the one who saved them from being slaves in Egypt.

What did God command the Israelites about other gods?

God commanded the Israelites not to worship any other god.

*13-05*

What did God command the Israelites about other worship?

God commanded the Israelites not to make any idols or worship any idols.

What did God command the Israelites about God's name?

God commanded the Israelites not to treat God's name in a disrespectful way.

What did God command the Israelites about the Sabbath day?

God commanded the Israelites to work for six days and rest on the seventh day.

13-06

What did God command the Israelites about how they should treat one another?

God commanded the Israelites to honor their parents. God commanded them not to murder, not steal, not lie, and not covet what other people have.

13-07

How did the Israelites respond to God's words?

The people agreed to obey God's commands. They agreed to only worship God.

13-08

What did God tell the Israelites to build for him?

God told them to make the Tent of Meeting.

What did God tell the Israelites to make to separate the two rooms of the tent?

God told the Israelites to make a large curtain to separate the two rooms.

Who could enter into the room behind the curtain where God was?

Only the high priest could enter there because God would come behind the curtain.

13-09

What did God tell the Israelites to make and put in front of the Tent of Meeting?

God told the Israelites to make an altar so anyone who had disobeyed God's law could bring an animal sacrifice to the altar.

How could the people cover their sin?

They could bring an animal for the priests to sacrifice.

What did the sacrifice do to the people's sin?

The blood of the sacrifice would cover their sin. God would no longer see their sin and the person would become clean in God's sight.

Who did God choose to be his priests?

God chose Aaron and his descendants.

13-10

How did God record his commands to his people?

God wrote the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets and gave the tablets to Moses. God also gave the people other laws and rules to follow.

What would God do to the Israelites if they obeyed God's commandments?  
God would bless them and protect them.

What would God do to the Israelites if they disobeyed his commandments?  
God would punish them.

*13-11*

How long was Moses on top of Mount Sinai?

Moses was on top of Mount Sinai for many days talking with God.

What did the people do when they got tired of waiting for Moses to return from Mount Sinai?

They asked Aaron to make a gold idol that they could worship.

Was it good or bad for the Israelites to ask Aaron to make a gold idol?

The people sinned greatly against God when they asked Aaron to make a gold idol.

*13-12*

What did the Israelites do with the gold idol that Aaron made?

The Israelites worshiped gold idol and made sacrifices to the gold idol.

What did God think of the Israelites worshiping the gold idol?

God was angry with the Israelites. God told Moses he wanted to destroy them.

Why did God not destroy the Israelites when they disobeyed?

God did not destroy them because Moses prayed for them.

*13-13*

What happened to the stones on which God had written the Ten Commandments?

Moses saw the idol when he came down the mountain. Moses was angry and smashed the stone tablets.

*13-14*

What did Moses do to the idol?

Moses burned the idol and ground it into powder, and then he made the people drink it in water.

What did God do to the Israelites?

God sent a plague that caused many to die.

13-15

What did God tell Moses to do to replace the stone tablets?

God told Moses to make new stone tablets to replace the old ones he had broken.

What did Moses do to ask God to forgive the people?

Moses climbed the mountain again. Moses prayed that God would forgive the people. God listened to Moses' prayer and forgave the people.

Where did the Israelites go after Mount Sinai?

God led the Israelites toward the Promised Land.

## **Movement 2: Theological Questions**

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### **What Does This Story Teach Us?**

1. What does it mean to be devoted to God? What does this story teach us about what it means to practice covenant faithfulness?
2. What kind of life should God's people live? How do the Ten Commandments summarize principles for living?
3. How serious is sin? What do we learn about sin and its consequences from this story?
4. How can God's people find forgiveness and restoration from their sin? How does this story help us understand how people can be forgiven of their sin?

## **Movement 3: Live It Out**

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### **Personal Implications & Applications From The Story**

*Guide the group to discuss practical obedience from this story and name concrete next steps.*

1. How would you describe your devotion to God?
2. Which of the Ten Commandments do you find the hardest to obey? Why?
3. Which specific sins do you need to ask God for forgiveness?
4. Think about this week. Where does "God's Covenant with Israel" challenge you to obey God in a practical way?

5. How does this key idea shape one decision you need to make right now:  
The story of God's covenant with Israel teaches us how God's people live in relationship with God.

## **Movement 4: Retell the Story**

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*Invite the group to retell the story several times until they can tell it clearly and faithfully.*

1. Can someone retell "God's Covenant with Israel" from beginning to end in their own words?
2. Retell this story again, but focus on what God did at each key moment.
3. Retell the story in three parts: beginning, middle, and ending. What changed in each part?
4. If you were teaching this story to your family tonight, how would you tell it simply and clearly?

### **Church Ministry**

Reflect on how this story can edify and mature the Christian community. Design a way to minister this story to your church community.

**Ministry Preparation:** Take time to consider how you could minister this story to others. What setting, audience, or approach would you use? Record your ideas below.

**Ministry Implementation:** Minister this story to a group of believers as you had planned. Use the information in this study to help develop a teaching or lead a discussion. Record your ministry plan below.

**Ministry Reflection:** Think about what you learned from ministering this story to other believers. What went well? What would you do differently? Reflect on your experience below.

## **Movement 5: Share It**

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*Help each person plan how they will share this story with others before the next gathering.*

1. Who is one specific person you will share "God's Covenant with Israel" with this week?
2. When and where will you share this story with them?
3. What is the one main truth from this story you want them to remember?

Report-back next meeting: Who did you share with, and what happened?

### **Mission Engagement**

Consider how you will witness this story to unbelievers. Design a way to share this story and engage them in what it teaches about Christianity and the gospel.

**Witness Preparation:** Take time to consider how you will witness this narrative to unbelievers. What context, relationship, or opportunity will you use? Record your ideas below.

**Witness Implementation:** Share this story with an unbeliever. Use the information in this study to help develop a natural conversation or teaching. Record your plan below.

**Witness Reflection:** Think about what you learned from sharing this story with unbelievers. What did they respond to? What questions did they ask? Reflect on your experience below.