



Weaving God's Promises

LESSON 6 THE PASSOVER AND EXODUS FROM EGYPT

SUMMARY OF TODAY'S STORY

When Pharaoh refuses to free the Israelite people, God sends a series of plagues upon the Egyptians. Following the last devastating plague, which claims the life of the Egyptian firstborn, the Pharaoh finally releases the Israelites.

The first Passover is observed at this time, during the night of the tenth plague. God promises that death will “pass over” the houses of the Israelites who properly observe the rituals of the Passover.

The next day, the people, led by Moses, leave Egypt and cross the Red Sea, which miraculously parts to let them pass. The water then washes over the Egyptian army that is pursuing them.

KEY CONCEPTS

Exodus
Freedom
Resurrection

WHERE YOU'LL FIND TODAY'S STORY

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*.

Exodus 7:14-14:31 (from the plagues to the Exodus)

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church at these times:
Year B: Maundy Thursday and the Great Vigil of Easter



WEAVING OUR STORY WITH THE BIBLICAL STORY

This part of the Moses story takes us to the other side of the Red Sea.

It includes the 10 plagues, the first Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea.

These are important events; the first Passover needs to be understood in order for us to understand how Jesus' Last Supper (when he celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples) replaces the Passover for us and how Jesus becomes the Paschal (Passover) Lamb in his sacrifice on the cross.

The Pesach (Passover) is one of the most important feasts of the Jewish year. Its tradition of unleavened bread and the rest of the Passover meal (the Seder) is important in our own tradition as well.

Through all of these trials, the Israelites do indeed become God's chosen people.

This is the great story of liberation for all oppressed and enslaved peoples of the world. In this story, we see clearly how God cares for those who are poor and oppressed and how God wishes for all to be free.

Now the people of God are on their way to Sinai to find the meaning of this Exodus in the Ten Commandments, the Law that God gives to them in making them God's people. In this powerful story, we see very clearly how God leads us and how God stays with us, no matter what.



THE EPISCOPAL THREAD

The numerous references to the Exodus experience in our Easter hymns attest to the connection that we make between the freedom gained

by the Israelites in crossing the Red Sea and the freedom that we gained by Jesus' crossing from death to life in his resurrection.

Where the Paschal blood is poured,
death's dark angel sheathes his sword;
Israel's hosts triumphant go
through the wave that drowns the foe.

—#174 (*The Hymnal 1982*,
New York, NY: Church Publishing, 1985)

Come, ye faithful, raise the strain
of triumphant gladness!
God hath brought his Israel
into joy from sadness;
loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke
Jacob's sons and daughters,
led them with unmoistened foot
through the Red Sea waters.

—#199/200 (*The Hymnal 1982*,
New York, NY: The Church Pension Fund, 1985)

There are also many other places in our Prayer Book that remind us of the Exodus from Egypt. One of the canticles for Morning Prayer, Canticle 8, is the Song of Moses from Exodus 15, added as a new canticle to the 1979 Prayer Book (p. 85).

The Exodus is referred to in our Baptismal Covenant in the Thanksgiving Over the Water (*BCP*, pp. 306-307). The story of the Passover is the Old Testament reading on Maundy Thursday, when we observe the institution of the Last Supper and the Eucharist by Jesus.

And the account of the Exodus, of the nine readings listed, is the only required reading of our salvation history at the Great Vigil of Easter (*BCP*, p. 289).

And again at the Easter Vigil, in what is called the Exsultet—the glorious chant of praise to God for the coming of light from darkness in the rising of Jesus Christ—we say:

- This is the night when you brought our fathers, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea on dry land (*BCP*, pp. 286-287).

Finally, we make our connection to this great Passover when, at the breaking of the bread at Holy Eucharist, the priest loudly proclaims, “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” This is when we recognize the connection, as this Easter hymn says:

The day of resurrection!
Earth, tell it out abroad;
the Passover of gladness,
the Passover of God.

—#210 (*Hymnal 1982*, New York, NY:
The Church Pension Fund, 1985)



GATHERING

Check-In

Invite group members to sit comfortably, giving them an opportunity to visit with each other, establish friendships and build community. Relationships are an important dimension of Christian formation, so a few minutes of visiting will enrich their spiritual development. This is also the perfect time to “check in” with your group members by asking them to share how they are feeling at the time or what kind of a week they had.



PRAYER

Materials:

- small table with cloth to cover it
- large pillar candle or large Christ candle
- matches
- cross

After all the group members have had a few minutes of fellowship time, gather them together for a simple opening prayer. Ask one of the members to light a pillar candle while saying these words from Psalm 119:105:

- Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Explain that you are inviting the light of God to be with all of you. (You might consider posting this verse from Psalm 119 in the meeting room).

Invite the member who lit the candle to read this prayer (part of *The Song of Moses*, *BCP*, p. 85):

I will sing to the Lord, for he is lofty and uplifted;
The horse and its rider has he hurled into the sea.
The Lord is my strength and my refuge;
The Lord has become my Savior.
This is my God and I will praise him,
The God of my people and I will exalt him.
The Lord is a mighty warrior;
Yahweh is his Name. *Amen.*



TELLING THE STORY

Set the Scene:

As the group enters the room, have the hymn “*Come Ye Faithful*” (#199 in *Hymnal 1982*) playing quietly in the background. Once they’ve had a chance to settle in, play it from the beginning and invite the group members to pay close attention to the lyrics. If possible, have copies of the lyrics available for them. Remind them that last week they heard the hymn “*Go Down Moses*.” How is this one different? What has changed?

Read today’s story aloud from the Bible or tell the story in your own words. There are three parts to this story: the plagues, the Passover and the Red Sea crossing. You may first want to review the previous lesson, which is the first part of this great story of Moses leading his people to freedom from slavery in Egypt.

There is a lot of fear in this story—and also a lot of trust. Dramatize your storytelling to bring out these emotive elements. You’ll find ideas for bringing the story to life for the group on pages 2-3 under *Storytelling Enhancements* in the Appendix, also found on the website.



WEAVING OUR FAITH

Lesson Box

Materials:

- 1 3" x 5" index card for the day's scribe
- pen or pencil
- a file box in which to store the cards

Ask for a volunteer or assign a group member to act as scribe. Then, ask the group to articulate the most important lesson gleaned from the day's reading. As prompts, you might ask:

- The Israelites gained their freedom by crossing the Red Sea. When Jesus crossed from life to death on the cross, what did we gain?

Share the following story; ask for reactions when you've finished:

- When God sent the Red Sea to close in upon the Egyptians and the Israelites were then truly free, the angels cheered for the liberation of the Israelites. Then they turned around and saw God crying. "Why?" they asked. God answered, "Because the Egyptians are my children, too, and I loved them."

Once the group has agreed on its wording, ask the scribe to write the lesson on the card, date it and file it in the box. By the end of the year, you will have a wonderful and thorough summation of the lessons covered in the group members' own words.



CLOSING PRAYER

Before the group leaves, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or back to their homes with God's love and blessing. The following is another section of The Song of Moses (*BCP*, p. 85):

Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in might;
 your right hand, O Lord, has
 overthrown the enemy.
 Who can be compared with you, O Lord, among
 the gods?
 Who is like you, glorious in holiness,
 awesome in renown, and worker of
 wonders?
 You stretched forth your right hand;
 the earth swallowed them up.
 With your constant love you led the people you
 redeemed;
 with your might you brought them
 in safety to your holy dwelling.

End the lesson with a dismissal that is used in church, such as:

- The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The youth respond:

- And also with you.



Weaving God's Promises

FAR FROM HOME—THE EXODUS

Participants list the pros and cons of leaving everything behind and the emotions that must have accompanied the Israelites on their Exodus.

Materials:

- copies of the “Far From Home” worksheet (p. 7), 1 per participant
- pens and pencils
- easel
- poster board
- markers
- masking tape

Preparation:

Make copies of the “Far From Home” worksheet (p. 7).

Set the poster board on the easel or tape it to the wall for use later.

Directions:

1. Distribute pens or pencils and copies of the handout to participants.
2. Divide the students into pairs or small groups.
3. Invite pairs/groups to think about the pros and cons of having to leave their homes, using the guidelines provided on the handout.
4. After several minutes of discussion, ask groups to have a similar discussion about what leaving home might have meant to the Israelites.
5. Allow about 10 minutes for this task.
6. Once groups have finished, regather and invite them to share their responses and list them on the poster board.

Close:

- Once the list is done, discuss:
 - How does the Israelites’ experience compare to yours?
 - What do you think they were feeling?
 - Where was God in their experience?

FAR FROM HOME

Here's the scenario: You and your family have to leave home suddenly and move very far away. Make a list of the pros (advantages) and cons (disadvantages) of having to do so. Then, answer the two questions that follow.

Leaving home — PROS

Leaving home — CONS

How would you feel if this happened to you? _____

How would your faith help you through this? _____

Now, think about the Israelites having to leave the home they'd known for generations. List the pros and cons of their leaving and answer the two questions that follow.

Leaving Egypt — PROS

Leaving Egypt — CONS

How do you think the Israelites felt about leaving everything they knew?

_____ What role did their faith play in seeing them through the ordeal?



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OBSERVING THE SEDER

Participants prepare and eat traditional foods served at a Seder. While eating, they will ask and answer the four questions asked at every Seder.

Note: If possible, have several pillows in the room to make for more comfortable seating.

General materials:

- pot
- 2 mixing bowls
- mixing spoons
- measuring cups
- fork
- baking sheet
- rolling pin
- paper plates
- waxed paper

Matzoh

Matzoh is made without yeast, according to tradition, because the Hebrews did not have time for their bread to rise before leaving their homes in a hurry. They needed to have their sandals on, their staffs in their hands and their food ready.

Ingredients (for 8 servings):

- 2 cups whole wheat flour, plus extra for dusting hands
- $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water
- oil

Directions:

1. In one bowl, mix the flour with the water to make the matzoh dough. Dust lightly with flour.
2. Divide the dough into as many pieces as there are group members and give each a piece to work with.
3. Ask the youth to flour their hands, then knead the dough for 3-5 minutes.
4. Demonstrate how to roll the dough flat with a rolling pin. The dough should be rolled to about $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick.
5. Place the flattened dough on a greased baking sheet and prick it with a fork, then sprinkle with salt.

6. Bake for 8-10 minutes at 450°. For soft matzoh, remove immediately from the oven when done. For crisp matzoh, leave it in the turned-off oven until cool.
7. Serve and enjoy!

Hard-Boiled Eggs

The hard-boiled eggs are a symbol of spring, when the Passover meal takes place. The salt water is a reminder of the tears of the Hebrew slaves. Usually it would be bitter herbs such as parsley which is dipped into the salt water.

Ingredients:

8 hard-boiled eggs, cooled
salt
water
fresh parsley, chopped or snipped

Directions:

1. Mix salt and parsley with water in a small bowl.
2. Invite the participants to shell the eggs then dip them into the salt water.
3. Serve and enjoy.

Charoset

Charoset, traditionally made with chopped walnuts, wine, cinnamon and apples, represents the mortar or clay that the Hebrew slaves used to make the Pharaoh's bricks. Here we use grape juice instead of wine.

Materials:

chopping board
measuring cups
measuring spoons
mixing bowl
mixing spoons
small paper cups or bowls
plastic spoons
knives

Ingredients (for 8 servings):

2 apples
½ cup chopped walnuts (*Please do not use peanuts.*)
½-¾ cup grape juice
½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ cup raisins

Directions:

1. Core the apples and chop them into small diced pieces. Place the apples in a bowl.
2. Add nuts, cinnamon, raisins and grape juice and mix well.
3. Pour into the cups or bowls and serve.

The Four Questions Asked at the Passover Meal

Question 1: On all other nights we eat all kinds of breads and crackers. Why do we eat only matzoh on Pesach?

Matzoh reminds us that when the Jews left the slavery of Egypt they had no time to bake their bread. They took the raw dough on their journey and baked it in the hot desert sun into hard crackers called matzoh.

Question 2: On all other nights we eat many kinds of vegetables and herbs. Why do we eat bitter herbs—maror—at our Seder?

Maror reminds us of the bitter and cruel way the Pharaoh treated the Jewish people when they were slaves in Egypt.

Question 3: On all other nights we don't usually dip one food into another. At our Seder we dip the parsley in salt water and the bitter herbs in Charoset. Why do we dip our foods twice tonight?

We dip bitter herbs into Charoset to remind us how hard the Jewish slaves worked in Egypt. The chopped apples and nuts look like the clay used to make the bricks used in building the Pharaoh's buildings.

We dip parsley into salt water. The parsley reminds us that spring is here and new life will grow. The salt water reminds us of the tears of the Jewish slaves.

Question 4: On all other nights we eat sitting up straight. Why do we lean on a pillow tonight?

We lean on a pillow to be comfortable and to remind us that once we were slaves, but now we are free.



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TWO FAITHS, ONE STORY

Group members will invite and speak with a rabbi and a priest about the stories of Passover and the Exodus and how these events are recognized in their respective faiths.

Materials:

- 2 thank-you notes or blank cards, with envelopes
- pens
- addresses of guests invited to the lesson
- 2 postage stamps
- simple snacks and drinks

Preparation:

In the weeks before this lesson, invite a rabbi from a local temple and the priest from your own or another local congregation to join you for your time together. Let them know that the youth are interested in learning more about the Exodus and about Passover (Pesach) and its traditions.

Before their visit to the group, take the time to talk about your guests with the group and make a list of questions they'd like to ask. Questions can focus on such things as:

- the experience of the Israelites in Egypt
- their motivation for leaving
- the significance of Passover
- the tradition of the Seder
- the relation between the Exodus and Jesus' resurrection
- the similarities and differences between the two faiths in relation to Passover and Easter

Directions:

1. On the day of the visit, prepare some simple snacks and drinks for the guests and the group to share.
2. Invite the guests to open and close the session with prayer.

Close:

- Invite the group members to write thank-you notes to the guests.



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BRINGING THE PAST TO LIFE: SCULPTURE AND PAINTING, PART 2

Participants continue working on or complete the sculptures or murals they began in the previous week's lesson.

Materials:

clay
plastic mats (for working with the clay)
sturdy plastic knives
rulers
large sheets of art paper and plastic
tempera paints, assorted colors
markers, assorted colors
paint brushes and pencils
erasers
containers with water for cleaning brushes
masking tape
glue
sand, dried grasses, tissue paper and miscellaneous items to add interest and depth
photos of structures from the reign of Ramses II (These can be found in books on Egyptian history as well as online.)

Preparation:

Place a large sheet of art paper on a table or on the floor. Be sure to place it on the plastic to avoid damage to the surface below.

Directions:

1. Ask group members to choose an art activity. Let them know that they will continue working on the activity into the next week (and perhaps beyond, depending on the scope).
2. Sculptors will select one ancient structure to replicate.
3. Artists need to first decide which events will be depicted in the mural. Before they begin the mural, tell them to sketch the event outlines in pencil on the art paper, making sure they are in chronological order. Once the sketches are done, they may begin painting.

Close:

- Clean brushes and put all art materials away.
- Do not roll up the mural.
- Carefully store the artwork in a safe location.
- Be sure to include a label with the artist's name with each piece.
- Display the group's work in a place where they can be viewed by the entire congregation.



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SURVIVING THE WILDERNESS

Participants work together to identify uses for basic materials and tools the Israelites might have carried with them on their exodus from Egypt.

Preparation:

With the help of your education coordinator and/or parents of your students, gather 2 or 3 sets of the following items the day before you meet.

Materials:

ball of twine
pieces of leather or heavy fabric
long sticks, branches or dowels
sheet or small tarp
baskets, varying sizes and shapes
bottles of water
blanket
hammer, crow bar (or similar), shovel
rocks, varying sizes and shapes
paper and pencils (for recording answers)
optional: cell phone camera

Directions:

1. For a large group of participants, divide into groups of 3-5. For small groups, you may choose to have all of the participants work together as one.
2. Explain that when the Israelites left Egypt, they did so on foot and could only take with them what they could carry. Therefore, they had to be creative and find many uses for common items.
3. Present the group with the objects you gathered. First, explain that they are to list at least 5 different uses for each item. Then, they are to come up with a larger structure or object that incorporates at least 7 of the 9 items they were given.

Close:

- Ask one participant to act as spokesperson for each group and present their ideas to the entire group.
- Take photos of the objects built and post them on your bulletin board.