

My Jewish Story

Where do I connect with the story of the Jewish nation?

Introduction

We'll begin the lesson by encouraging the students to think about their connection to the people of Israel and their history, with the aim of stimulating a sense of belonging. This will serve as background for studying the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

The teacher will write the following words on the board and will ask their students to choose a word from the list and share where their Judaism fits within that context.

My daily schedule	The annual cycle of a year	My school studies	My family	Leisure time
My personal values	My dreams for the future	Parties and events	My hobbies	What I eat
What I wear	Language	My home	Personal travel	

Part 2 - Active learning

What Does the Exodus from Egypt Mean to Me?

We'll start with a discussion of the meaning of a Mishnaic statement (Pesachim 10:5):

"בכל דור ודור חייב חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים"
(משנה פסחים, י"ה)

In each and every generation, a person must view himself as if they, themselves, left Egypt.





”בכל דור ודור חייב אדם להראות את עצמו כאילו הוא בעצמו יצא עתה משעבוד מצרים שנאמר ואותנו הוציא משם וגו'. ועל דבר זה צוה הקב"ה בתורה וזכרת כי עבד היית כלומר כאילו אתה בעצמך היית עבד ויצאת לחירות ונפדית:”
(רמבם הלכות חמץ פרק ז' הלכה ו')

In each and every generation, a person must present themselves as if they, themselves, just left the slavery of Egypt, as [Deuteronomy 6:23] states: "He took us out from there." Regarding this matter, God commanded in the Torah: "Remember that you were a slave [Deuteronomy 5:15]" - i.e., as if you, yourself, were a slave and went out to freedom and were redeemed.

It is a good idea to write these statements on the board in Hebrew and in English.

Explanation: We don't only tell the story of the Exodus, rather we are supposed to experience it. Every year we are supposed to feel that this is a new experience – that we are the people redeemed from Egyptian slavery, on our way to the Promised Land of Israel.

After discussing these sources with the students the following questions are posed:

-  How is it possible for us to view ourselves as if we left Egypt? What does that mean?
Ask the students to share things that they do in their own home on Seder night.
-  Why do we have to pretend that we are the slaves who left Egypt if this really didn't happen to us? Why can't we just read the words of the Haggadah and relate the story that happened long ago?
-  The Exodus took place thousands of years ago. What is its relevance for us today, and why is it important for us to try and feel that we are the ones who experienced it?
-  What is the relevance of us feeling like slaves who are being freed?

Now we will tell the story of the Exodus and try to experience it together with our students.

Here we suggest an activity that will allow students to show what they know about the Exodus story.

With more advanced students it is possible to focus only on Step 2.

Group activity

Step 1 - Each group of 4 students will receive a card that presents a different chronological stage in the Exodus story (taken from the Chabad website) and will complete the task (we will tell the students that it is not necessary to fill out everything in each stage).

* Explain to the students that not all of the elements need to be filled out in each stage of the story.



Time: When did the story happen? How long did the story take? What do we know about the historical period in which the story happened? On what date on the calendar does the story take place? What time of day?



Place: Where did the story take place? What do we know about this place? What do we know about the culture of the place? About its climate? What does the place look like?



Character: Who are the characters we know from the story of the Exodus? Write people's names and what they did.



Story: What is the sequence of events of the Exodus story? What can you share about the background of the story (slavery)? What happened during the actual Exodus?

Step 2 - We will divide the class into four groups according to the different characteristics of the story: Time, Place, Character, Story. Each group will be instructed to have representatives who will present the different parts of the story. Each group will write down what we learn about the Exodus from looking at their specific characteristic of the story.

Concluding the lesson:

Each of the groups will present what they learned about the category they examined, and explain what they learned about the story of the Exodus based on their discussion.

Then we will discuss the questions -

1. How do you feel about the story now? Do you feel that now you know it better? Does it help you feel the Exodus more?

We will emphasize that we raised questions of values and ideas based on the Exodus story.

What does it mean to be a slave? What does it mean to go to freedom?

What does it mean to belong to a people?

What significance is there in God's providence?

2. We will hand out a page on which a mirror is drawn:

Look in the mirror and think what would you like to "get out of Egypt" this year? In what way would you like to be more of a free person and less of a slave?

In closing -

We will hand out the set of cards to the students, and explain how it can be used during their family seder night.

We will point out to the students that the cards have the same categories that came up in the lesson - Character, Place, Time and Story - and explain that on Seder night we will use them to think about our personal-family story, and not only at the story of the Exodus.



Going Down to Egypt

Jacob and his children go down to Egypt in order to be close to Joseph. Joseph was the second-in-command to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. It was Joseph who was smart enough to save all of Egypt and the surrounding countries from a terrible famine. Jacob and his family settle in the Land of Goshen where they grow and are successful.

As long as Jacob and his children were alive, the family was respected and honored, but after they passed away “A new king arose in Egypt who knew not Joseph.” Some of the commentaries suggest that the king actually knew the story, but made as if he did not know Joseph. “And he said to his people: ‘Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase.’” (Exodus 1:8-10)

What can we learn about the story of the Exodus from Egypt?

Think about:



Time



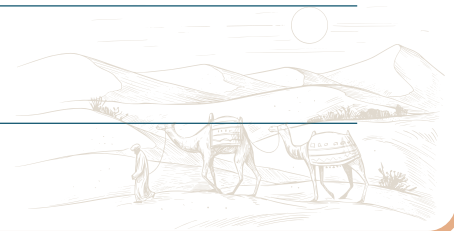
Place

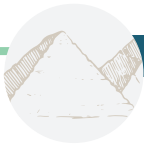


Character



Story





Slavery

The Egyptians decided that the best solution to the "Jewish problem" would be slavery. The Jews were forced to do hard work, build cities and treasure houses for Pharaoh, but they nevertheless continued to multiply, and to Pharaoh it seemed that they were multiplying at a frightening rate. To stop this, Pharaoh summoned the Hebrew midwives, Shifra and Puah, and ordered them to kill every male baby that was born. He thought that by doing this he would surely put an end to the growth of the Jewish race. When the midwives disregard his order, he commands his people to throw every newborn baby boy into the Nile. Pharaoh's astrologers look at the constellations and predict that Israel's savior would find his death by means of water, so Pharaoh believed that if he threw every baby boy into the water, he would ensure that a potential Jewish leader would never survive.

What can we learn about the story of the Exodus from Egypt?

Think about:



Time



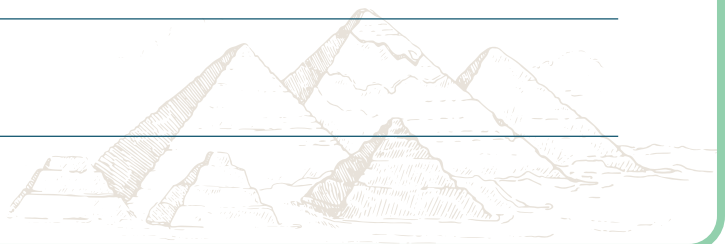
Place



Character



Story





Moshe's Birth

Yocheved, the wife of Amram of the tribe of Levi, gives birth to a son. According to the Sages, the baby was born prematurely, which allows her to hide him for three months. When these months pass, she assembles a small (waterproof) basket and puts the baby in it on the banks of the Nile River. The baby's sister, Miriam, hides behind a bush to keep an eye on him.

Pharaoh's daughter comes to bathe in the river and sees the basket. When she opens it she sees a baby crying, and realizes it was a Hebrew child. She takes pity on it and takes the baby to her home, calling him "Moshe" which means "I drew him out of the water."

Miriam approaches the princess and offers to find a nurse for the baby. When Pharaoh's daughter accepts her proposal, Miriam brings Yocheved, Moshe's mother, and Pharaoh's daughter hires her to nurse the baby and take care of him. When Moshe grows up and matures, he is returned to the palace, where Pharaoh's daughter raises him as if he were her own son.

What can we learn about the story of the Exodus from Egypt?

Think about:



Time



Place



Character



Story





Moshe is Appointed Leader

Moshe leaves the palace as a young man and discovers that his people are suffering. He sees an Egyptian man beating a Hebrew and kills the Egyptian. The next day he sees two Jews fighting each other. When he reproves them ("Wicked man! Why did you strike your fellow?") they report him to the authorities, and Moshe is forced to flee to Midian. There he saves Jethro's daughters, marries one of them, Zipporah, and becomes the shepherd of his father-in-law's sheep.

In the meantime, the situation of the Israelites in Egypt became worse day by day "and their cries to God rose up from their work".

While Moses was tending Jethro's flock, he encounters a Burning Bush where God revealed Himself to him and instructs him to go to Pharaoh and demand from him: "Release my people so they will serve Me." Moshe points out that he is "slow of speech and slow of tongue" - a stutterer - and God appoints his brother Aaron as his spokesman. In Egypt, Moshe and Aaron gather the elders of the people to tell them that the time of redemption has come. The people believe them; Pharaoh, on the other hand, refuses to release them and even increases Israel's suffering. He increases the burden on his Jewish slaves and orders the foremen to stop providing them with straw for making bricks. Now they also have to go collect straw themselves and manage to produce the same amount of bricks.

Moshe can no longer bear the pain of his people. He turns to God and says: "Why did You bring harm upon this people? Why did You send me?" God promises that redemption is near "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a strong hand he will permit them to leave and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."

After that, God revealed himself to Moshe. He offers four expressions of redemption: he promises to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, free them from their slavery, redeem them, and take them to become the chosen people at Mount Sinai. After that he will bring them to the Promised Land, keeping a promise he made to their ancestors.

What can we learn about the story of the Exodus from Egypt?

Think about:



Time



Place

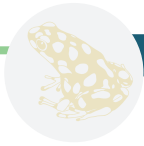


Character



Story





Ten Plagues

Moses and Aaron repeatedly come before Pharaoh and they demand from him in the name of God "Release my people and let them serve me in the desert." Time and again, Pharaoh refuses to listen. Aaron's staff turns into a snake and swallows the magic staffs of the Egyptians. Pharaoh still refuses to let the Jews go. Moshe warns him that God will destroy Egypt, yet Pharaoh is not moved. God begins to send a series of plagues on the Egyptians. Tormented by each plague, Pharaoh promises to free the Israelites, but as soon as the plague ends, he reneges on his promise. The ten plagues were:

- 1) **Blood** - Aaron strikes the Nile with his staff and the water turns to blood;
- 2) **Frogs** - Swarms of frogs cover all of Egypt;
- 3) **Lice** - Egyptians are covered with lice and vermin. Pharaoh does not change his mind.
- 4) **Wild Animals** - a swarm of wild animals invade the cities;
- 5) **Plague** - A deadly epidemic kills all domestic animals;
- 6) **Boils** - painful blisters torment the Egyptians;
- 7) **Hail** - hail mixed with fire falls from the sky and destroys the entire crop.

Still "Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he did not release the Israelites as God had told Moshe." The Egyptians have already suffered too much. They beg Pharaoh to release the Jews. When Moses came to Pharaoh and warned him about the eighth plague, Pharaoh said: Do you want to worship God? I will only let the men go, but the women and children will stay in Egypt. Moshe says:

"We will all go. We will go with our sons and daughters, our flocks and herds." Pharaoh refuses again, and the eighth and ninth plagues come.

8) **Locusts** - Swarms of locusts destroy all crops and all vegetation

9) **Darkness** - A thick, physical darkness envelops the entire land of Egypt.

God commands the Israelites to bring a Passover sacrifice to God: a goat or a lamb must be slaughtered and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts of every house of the Israelites, so that God will pass over these houses when He comes to kill the firstborn of Egypt. The roasted meat of the sacrifice should be eaten that night together with matzah and maror (bitter herbs).

Then God brings the tenth plague on Egypt.

10) **Death of the Firstborn** - At midnight of the night of the 15th of Nissan, all the firstborn of Egypt all killed.

What can we learn about the story of the Exodus from Egypt?

Think about:



Time



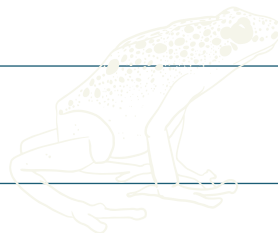
Place



Character



Story





The Exodus

The death of the Egyptian firstborn finally breaks Pharaoh's resistance, and he not only agrees but actually expels the Israelites from his country. Since they leave quickly, the dough they prepared for the journey does not have time to rise. Before they leave, they borrow gold, silver and clothing from the Egyptians.

The Israelites are commanded to celebrate the day they came out of Egypt on an annual basis, by removing all leaven from their homes and possessions for seven days, eating unleavened bread, and telling their sons and daughters about the miracle of the Exodus from Egypt.

Shortly after Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to leave Egypt, he pursued them to force them to return. The Hebrews find themselves trapped between Pharaoh's armies and the Reed Sea. God tells Moses to raise his staff above the water; the sea splits in two and allows the Israelites to pass through it safely, but then it closes over the Egyptians who are pursuing them, drowning them. Moshe, the children of Israel, Miriam the prophetess and the women of Israel, sing a song of praise and thanksgiving to God.

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Time



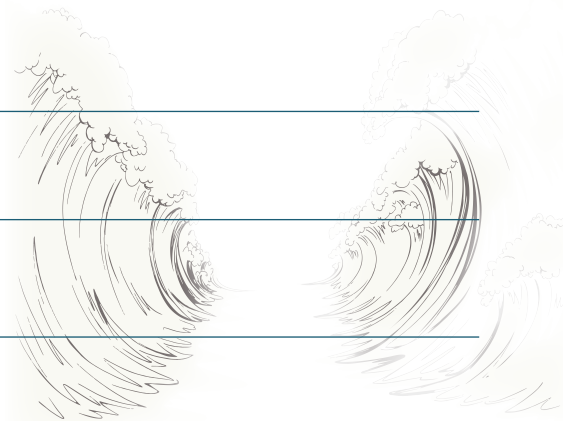
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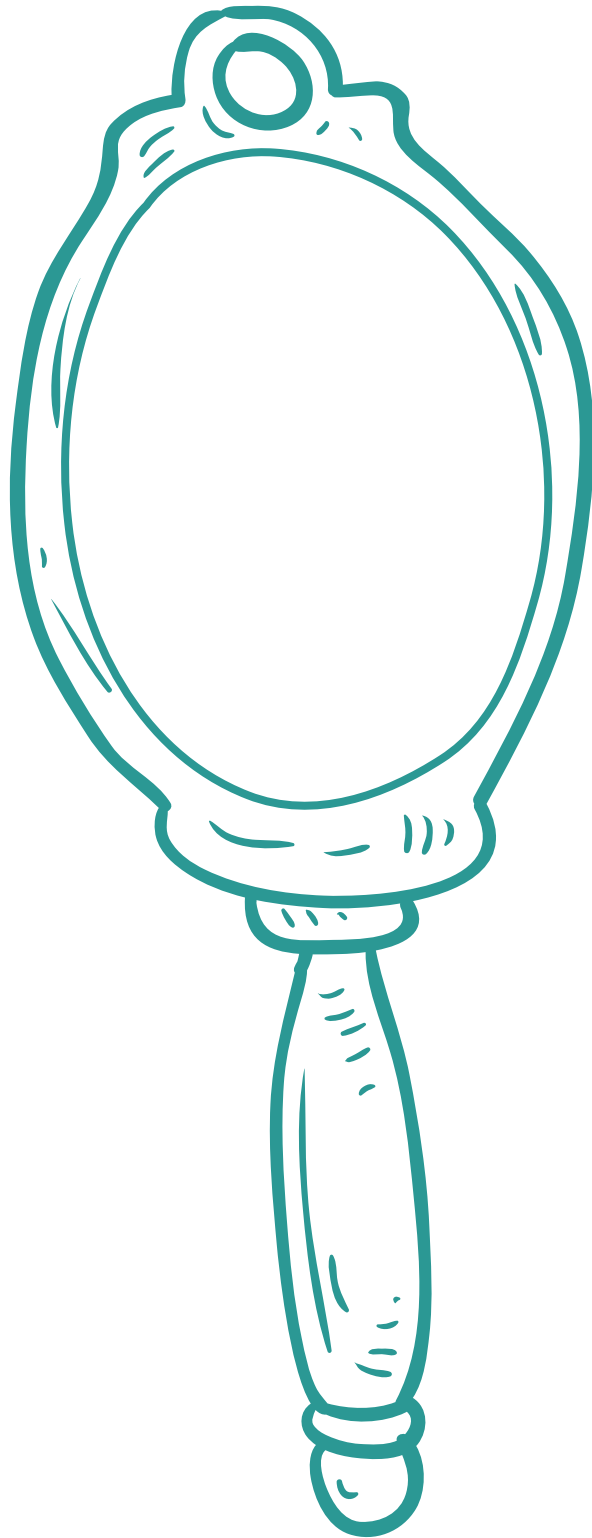


Character



Story





Look in the mirror and think:

In what way would you like to be more of a free person and less of a slave?



1. Where was our character born and raised?
2. What was special about that country?
3. Did it treat its minorities well or poorly?
4. Was it easy to leave or difficult?
5. What were the places our character stopped at before they arrived here?



Our Family Story



Egypt was the empire of the ancient world, a rich and powerful nation. Egypt enjoyed a huge and unlimited source of water - the Nile. Egypt was filled with pyramids and huge palaces and temples.



Tanakh Story



1. Who is the character in your family story you would like to learn more about?
2. Did they leave their birthplace and country alone?
3. How old were they?
4. What did they leave behind?



Our Family Story



Moshe's name appears only once in the Haggadah, although he is the main character in *Yetziat Mitzrayim*.



Tanakh Story



1. When does our family story begin?
2. When did Jews come to this land?
3. When did our character leave their country of origin?
4. How long did it take them to get here?



Our Family Story



The Israelites left Egypt on this very evening, the 14th of Nissan, more than 3,000 years ago, and after hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt.



Tanakh Story



1. And what is the story of our family?
2. Is there a story of rescue?
3. Did they have a choice or were they forced to flee?
4. Were there people who helped save us? Who were they?
5. What message do we want to pass on to future generations?



Our Family Story



Israel was miraculously saved from Egypt with the 10 Plagues and Kriat Yam Suf - but also thanks to the work of men and women who did not accept the evil fate of slavery. The Torah names such people as Shifra and Puah, Moshe, Aharon, Miriam and the Israelite overseers.



Tanakh Story



Pesach: Our Family Story

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם

“In each and every generation a person must view themselves as though they personally left Egypt”

Many Jewish families have a story revolving around their own “exodus” – migration from one country to another.

The purpose of these cards is to help you share your own family story in an interactive manner, together with the people sitting around your table, at your Seder or Yom Tov meal.

We invite you to print these two sheets and cut out the four pairs of cards. Each pair presents one dimension of the Exodus story from two perspectives – the Tanakh Story and your Family Story:

- Character
- Time
- Place
- Story

In each pair, one card has references to the Biblical Exodus story, and the other suggests questions related to this dimension to spark discussion of your own family story.

We suggest that you ask one of the adults to read out the "Tanakh Story" card, and ask a child to read the questions on the "Our Family Story" card. Encourage family members to answer the questions on the card. Encourage your children to play an active role in reading questions, and offer rewards for knowledge and creativity!

Chag Sameach!