

Year 1: Session 3 – Moses and the Israelites exit Egypt

Class 8: Exodus 12:21-40 – *Passover*

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Review the condition of the relationship between Israelites and Egyptians preceding this lesson's story
- Review Pharaoh's mindset and the role of the plagues
- Discuss the two sides of the "argument" in the Exodus story about who is greater, "Egypt/Pharaoh or God"
- Discuss the escalation of this "argument" in the Exodus story

Materials needed

- Video clip (from "The Lego Movie" and on rfour.org)
- Electronics that show the movie
- A piece of paper with a 1 written on it and a piece of paper with a 2 written on it.
 - Tape each paper on opposing walls of classroom.

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For the opening question for today's class, I [the teacher] will ask the question, and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we'll go around the circle.
- When it's your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here's this week's question:* What is one thing where you convinced your mom or dad to do something that s/he wasn't going to do otherwise?

TRANSITION to ACTIVITY

- We're going to read another story about Moses and Pharaoh talking to each other.
- But before we read that story, we're going to start today with an activity that will hopefully help us think about what's happening between Moses and Pharaoh in today's scripture story.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- So we're going to do an activity where in each round, we'll be presented with two choices.

- Each choice will be given a number – a one or a two. And it just so happens that we have a 1 on this wall and a 2 on that wall.
- After the two options are given, you are to determine what makes one choice **greater** than the other choice.
- We want you to make your decision somewhat quickly.
- Once you’ve made your choice, go stand by the wall with the number of the choice that you think is greater.
- And then one of you in each group will be asked to share why we think the choice we made is greater than the other option
- You MAY NOT insult or denigrate other people’s choices. For instance, you can’t say, “People who chose option 1 are losers so I picked option 2” – that is not an acceptable reason. You have to give reasons that have to do with the actual object and its place in history or your preferences for it
- As you listen to the reasons provided, you may switch your answer by moving to the other wall (this will happen at the very end of the round after all reasons have been shared, and NOT *while* people are talking)
- Any questions?
- **Note to teachers:** Ask individual students (by name) why they made the choice that they did – you only want a sample of answers, otherwise the activity will take too long.

DO ACTIVITY of “What’s Greater?”

What’s greater...

1. The Eiffel Tower or 2. the Statue of Liberty
1. The Pyramids in Egypt or 2. the Great Wall of China
1. George Washington or 2. Alexander the Great
1. The internal combustion engine (e.g. car engines) or 2. the computer chip?
1. Escalators or 1. Elevators
1. The internet or 2. space travel

ASK

- Were any of the questions difficult for you to answer? (hopefully “yes”)
- Did anyone’s reasons help you decide that you had made the right answer for yourself?
- Did anyone’s reasons help you change your mind?
- Did you find yourself wanting to argue the points that other people made?
- Were there any topics that you felt more passionate about than other topics?

TELL

- In last week’s lesson, we read the story of Moses telling Pharaoh to let go of the Israelites.
- Do you remember who the Israelites are? (a very large version of Jacob’s family – 400 years after he lived)
- And why do the Israelites need to be released by Pharaoh? (because they are being used/abused/mistreated as a cheap labor/power source)
- Did Pharaoh listen to Moses? (Nope)
- So what happened after Pharaoh said no? (The Nile turned to blood as a consequence)
- And this *still* didn’t change Pharaoh’s mind.
- In fact, this sequence of events (Moses tells Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, Pharaoh says no, plague happens, Pharaoh still says yes until the plague disappears and then goes back to saying “no”) happens 9 more times after that first plague.

- Today, we'll read and talk about that 10th and last "plague."
- Let's see what happens

READ Exodus 12:21-40 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse, including teachers*)

21 Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go, select lambs for your families, and slaughter the passover lamb. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood in the basin. None of you shall go outside the door of your house until morning. 23 For the Lord will pass through to strike down the Egyptians; when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over that door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you down. 24 You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children. 25 When you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this observance. 26 And when your children ask you, "What do you mean by this observance?" 27 you shall say, "It is the passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses." And the people bowed down and worshiped. 28 The Israelites went and did just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron. 29 At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. 30 Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his officials and all the Egyptians; and there was a loud cry in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. 31 Then he summoned Moses and Aaron in the night, and said, "Rise up, go away from my people, both you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord, as you said. 32 Take your flocks and your herds, as you said, and be gone. And bring a blessing on me too!" 33 The Egyptians urged the people to hasten their departure from the land, for they said, "We shall all be dead." 34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls wrapped up in their cloaks on their shoulders. 35 The Israelites had done as Moses told them; they had asked the Egyptians for jewelry of silver and gold, and for clothing, 36 and the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. And so they plundered the Egyptians. 37 The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. 38 A mixed crowd also went up with them, and livestock in great numbers, both flocks and herds. 39 They baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt; it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves. 40 The time that the Israelites had lived in Egypt was four hundred thirty years.

ASK

- Verse 21 – What are the Israelites supposed to slaughter? (a lamb)
- Do you think a lamb was valuable to an Israelite family? (yes – very much so; you don't kill lambs – you kill older sheep. You grow the lambs so that they can give birth to other sheep)
- Verse 22 – *hyssop* is like a homemade brush – what are the Israelites supposed to “paint” on the top of their doorway (aka “lintel”) and the sides of their doorway? (the blood of the slaughtered lamb. Kinda gross?)
- Verse 23 – Why are they to do this? (so that God's “destroyer” will *pass over* their homes)
- Verse 24 and 25 – What are the Israelites supposed to do in the future? (remember this night)
- Verse 29 – Who dies? (first born of the Egyptians AND their livestock)
- Anyone here a first born of the family or livestock?
- So....what do you think about God killing the oldest son of each family?
- Verse 31 – Does Pharaoh let the Israelites go? (Yes)
- Verse 31b – What does Pharaoh say the people are supposed to do? (worship the Lord)
- Verse 33 and 35-36 – Why are the Egyptians giving the Israelites their things? (basically, the Egyptians are now seeing the Israelites as a curse; they are paying them to leave)
- Verse 40 – how long had the Israelites been in Egypt? (430 years)

TELL

There's a number of things to note in this story. Here are some of them:

- Just like the previous story, this story portrays an interventionist God, a God who physically interacts with the people, a God who swoops down and kills children and livestock. This portrayal of God is more common in the earlier sections of the Old Testament. But if you look at the entirety of the Old and New Testament, you see a God who empowers humans who choose to listen to God -- like God does with Moses. If God is just going to intervene, why have people be part of the story at all? It is helpful when thinking about God in this story, to focus less on the portrayal of God's actions and focus more on what God is offering: That the Israelites can be free of oppression and that the Egyptians can be free of the consequences that come with oppressing a people.
- At first it can seem that God is on the side of the underdog (the Israelites), and ultimately that is true. But at the same time, God *does* deal very patiently and fairly with Pharaoh. God gives Pharaoh a number of chances to act/function/choose differently.
- Regarding the plagues – I encourage you to think of the plagues as an argument between Moses and Pharaoh that boils down to this: “Who is greater: Pharaoh or God?” Just like our opening activity, right?
 - Each plague can be seen as an escalation of the argument about who is greater. Pharaoh keeps saying no, showing that he can do whatever he wants. And God through Moses keeps saying, “When you say ‘no,’ things you will not like will happen that you cannot control or stop.”
 - For the Israelites, they *also* have to see/know/trust that God is greater than Pharaoh/Egypt as well – otherwise they are *not* going to leave Egypt.
 - At any point, Pharaoh could've said, “Ok, fine – go.” But because he didn't give in, the argument kept getting more passionate until death occurs.
- *Optional:* Isn't this unfair to the Egyptians? Shouldn't Pharaoh's oldest be killed only? Why should the whole nation be punished? But, remember our previous lesson: The best way to think about this is to think about pollution. A town could be full of innocent people, but if the factory at the middle of the town keeps polluting the air, then everyone's going to be less healthy. Even if the rest of Egypt was innocent, the factory of Pharaoh was polluting the entire country.
- There is a direct correlation between death and freedom in this story. The death of the firstborn child in every Egyptian family leads to the emancipation of the Israelites. The death of lambs and the displayed blood of the lambs keep the firstborn Israelite children alive.
 - This story is a very strong reminder that freedom isn't free. Everything has a cost. The Egyptians lost cheap labor and first born children and livestock. The Israelites lost lambs (a big deal for a poor family) and their homes. Even though their homes were slave quarters, it was all they knew...for FOUR hundred years! The Israelites were probably very excited, but also afraid (as we'll see in the next lesson/story).
- However, we're never really free despite what people promise. We *always* answer to someone/something. Which is why the Israelites are being let go for a certain purpose. It's mentioned in passing in verse 31, when Pharaoh says, “Go, worship the Lord, as you said” This is a repetition of the reason Moses has been giving Pharaoh to let the Israelites go from the beginning: God desires freedom for the Israelites, but not so they can just do whatever they want, but so that they can pay attention to God, receive God's healing power, and then be God's light to the world.

TRANSITION TO VIDEO CLIP

- I think it is helpful to *not* think of Pharaoh as a “bad guy,” here.
- Instead, I think it is helpful to think of Pharaoh as someone who thinks he knows better than God does, and holds on to certain ways of living that don't involve God.

- If we think about Pharaoh along these lines, it helps us to think about how not involving God in our own decisions can lead to destruction, often in ways that we may not even understand or expect.
- This story, as awful as it may seem, also helps us to think about all the different ways and attempts God will make to help us choose differently before we get to that place of destruction.
- So, let's end class with how the exodus story *could've* ended by watching a movie clip where the "bad guy" changes his mind because of his son.
- The movie clip is from "The Lego Movie"
- There's a blending between the what's happening for Lego characters and what's happening the real life characters (as you will see)
- The "bad" lego guy is the dad and the "good" lego guy is the son. And the "kragyle" is a shortened, misunderstanding of "krazy glue."
- Let's see what happens

WATCH VIDEO CLIP

ASK

- Was it clear to you what the dad wanted to do that then made him the "bad guy"? (the dad wanted to glue all the lego blocks together so that his "buildings" would stay the same forever)
- What did the Dad's crazy glue threaten to do? (not being able to use the lego blocks would've destroyed/put a stop to the boy's imaginative world, which is what the entire movie was about)
- Did the dad eventually change his mind? (yes)
- Why? (because his son told him he wasn't a bad guy; because he could see that what his son was doing was more important than what he wanted)

TELL

- In a lot of ways, this story is the same as the Passover story – without the death part.
- The person who is in charge is making decisions that negatively affect (almost) all of the lego characters (because LEGO CHARACTERS ARE ALIVE OK!?!) as well as his own son, just like Pharaoh's decisions affected everyone in his land.
- And there was arguing, at first, between the dad and the son.
- But then, once the dad sees how his decisions negatively affect his son, he changes his mind.
- The difference between the two stories, of course, is that the dad changes his mind before all of the destruction takes place whereas Pharaoh does not change his mind until *after* the destruction takes place.
- Next lesson we'll see that even *this* level of destruction does not ultimately change Pharaoh's mind and what happens at then...

CLOSING PRAYER