

AT HOME FAITH TIME FOR PRETEENS

PRETEEN SECTION

Make sure your parents read the Bible story too! You may read together, or separately.

BIBLE STORY: ESCAPING EGYPT (EXODUS 5-17)

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.”

“Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.’”

Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor.

Notice: *Why is it hard to believe Moses?*

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country.”

But Moses said to the Lord, “If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?”

Notice: *Why is Moses worried about Pharaoh?*

Then the Lord said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country. But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.”

Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded them. Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Perform a miracle,’ then say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,’ and it will become a snake.”

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the Lord commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.

Notice: *What does it mean that Pharaoh's heart became hard?*

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes out to the river. Confront him on the bank of the Nile, and take in your hand the staff that was changed into a snake. Then say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness. But until now you have not listened. This is what the Lord says: By this you will know that I am the Lord: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.'"

The Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs—and they will turn to blood.' Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone."

Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.

Remember: *What previously happened in the Nile River that might cause it to be full of blood?*

But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said. Instead, he turned and went into his palace, and did not take even this to heart. And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile to get drinking water, because they could not drink the water of the river.

This was the first of 10 plagues the Lord sent upon Egypt. The next 8 plagues are as follows: an infestation of frogs followed by gnats and flies, disease, boils, hail, locusts, and unending darkness.

Notice: *Why does God send these plagues?*

These plagues made life very difficult for everyone in Egypt. Sometimes Pharaoh would ask Moses to pray for him, promising to let the Hebrews

go, and Moses would pray for the plague to end. But every time Pharaoh hardened his heart, and refused to release the people.

Now the Lord had said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely. Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold.” (The Lord made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh’s officials and by the people.)

So Moses said, “This is what the Lord says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal.’ Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, ‘Go, you and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will leave.” Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.

Remember: Like the first plague, what previous action of Pharaoh does this plague remind you of?

The Lord had said to Moses, “Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you—so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.” Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter

Notice: God starts a new calendar with the Israelites, beginning today. What is the importance of a new calendar?

Pro Tip! This is a description of animal sacrifice, something we don’t practice today, but also something we don’t understand. When the lamb is slaughtered, what happens to the meat?

herbs, and bread made without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.

Notice: How are the people supposed to eat the Passover meal?

“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.” Then the people bowed down and worshiped. The Israelites did just what the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron.

At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.”

The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. “For otherwise,” they said, “we will all die!” So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. The Lord had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.

Notice: What do the Egyptians give the Israelites as they leave?

The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. Many other people went up with them, and also large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds. With the dough the Israelites had brought from Egypt, they baked loaves of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves.

Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the Lord's divisions left Egypt. Because the Lord kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the Lord for the generations to come.

After leaving Sukkoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Notice: *How is the Lord guiding the people?*

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon. Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.' And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord." So the Israelites did this.

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!" So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. The Egyptians—all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon.

Notice: *Why does Pharaoh change his mind?*

As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to

Notice: *Do the Israelites trust God after all those miracles?*

you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.”

Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, “Let’s get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.” Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

Remember: Again, what action from Pharaoh does this recall?

But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord

displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

“I will sing to the Lord,
for he is highly exalted.

Both horse and driver
he has hurled into the sea.

“The Lord is my strength and my defense;
he has become my salvation.

He is my God, and I will praise him,
my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

The Lord is a warrior;
the Lord is his name.

“The Lord reigns forever and ever.”

When Pharaoh’s horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the Lord brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron’s sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. Miriam sang to them:

“Sing to the Lord,
for he is highly exalted.

Both horse and driver
he has hurled into the sea.”

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?”

Notice: How long
can a human go
without water?

Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.

There the Lord issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test. He said, “If you listen carefully to the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to

his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you.”

Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

Notice: *Do the Israelites trust God yet?*

The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

Remember: *What’s the point of a test?*

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?” Moses also said, “You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord.”

Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’”

While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.

The Lord said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’”

That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the

desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’”

The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.

Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.”

However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

Notice: Did the Israelites pass the test?

Each morning everyone gathered as much as they needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, “This is what the Lord commanded: ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’”

So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. “Eat it today,” Moses said, “because today is a sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.”

Remember: What is the Sabbath?

Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. Then the Lord said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.” So the people rested on the seventh day.

The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt.’”

So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the Lord to be kept for the generations to come."

As the Lord commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna with the tablets of the covenant law, so that it might be preserved. The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

Notice: *How long did God provide food?*

The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink."

Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?"

But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

Notice: *Do the Israelites trust God now?*

Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

The Lord answered Moses, "Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

LET'S SUMMARIZE!

Answer each question yourself.

What is God doing in this story?

What does this story tell me about God?

What does this story tell me about me?

What does this story tell me about my relationship with God?

MEMORY WORK: THE APOSTLES' CREED

The Apostles' Creed is a statement of faith accepted by almost all Christians as a true summary of our faith. "Creed" simply believe, "I believe." This is a short summary of what we believe.

Memorize the second "I believe" statement at Jesus.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

THINGS TO NOTICE

This article particularly focuses on Jesus Passion, his death and resurrection. What do you think it means to be seated at the right hand of the Father?

What more would you want to say about Jesus?

AT HOME FAITH TIME FOR PRETEENS

PARENT SECTION

As you discuss questions with your preteens, these thoughts might help you go deeper.

CONVERSATIONS – BIBLE

Why is it hard to believe Moses?

Life was very bad at the moment for the Israelites. Maybe they felt like God had abandoned them or that God hated them. Do you find it hard to trust God when things are bad?

Why is Moses worried about Pharaoh?

God's own people didn't even believe Moses! If the people who believe in God don't listen to Moses, why would someone who doesn't believe in God listen? Moses is also still objecting to God's call. Do you think Moses will ever truly trust God?

What does it mean that Pharaoh's heart became hard?

To have a hard heart is to refuse to do anything kind or loving. It means Pharaoh shut himself off to mercy and compassion. Would you expect Pharaoh to care for the Israelites?

What previously happened in the Nile River that might cause it to be full of blood?

When Moses was a baby, Pharaoh ordered that all the male Hebrew children be thrown in the Nile River. This first plague makes visible the blood of all the babies Pharaoh drowned in the river.

In the Bible, prophets like Moses often use signs and symbols to reveal some evil that has been hidden. This plague reveals the evil Pharaoh committed against the Hebrews. In the Civil Rights movement, Dr. King did similar things, performing actions that revealed the evil hidden in his community and our nation. How can we expose problems today?

Why does God send these plagues?

Sometimes we like to think of God as "all-powerful" and able to do anything, and clearly God is powerful. But when it comes to humans, God always seems to give us a choice. We can trust God and work with God, or we can choose our own way and fight against God. Moses ultimately chose to work with God. Now God is giving Pharaoh this choice, but Pharaoh keeps choosing to work against God. Each plague is an opportunity for Pharaoh to change his mind, but he never does.

God also says the plagues are so that Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who worship other gods, know who the true God is. The first signs God has Moses perform – the snake and the leprosy – the Egyptians also perform. Anyone can do those things. But as the plagues continue, the Egyptians can't replicate them. Only the true God can cause these things to happen!

Each of these plagues represents an unordering or undoing of creation. They relate back to the original creation stories in the Bible.

Plague	Creation Connection	Undoing of Creation
1. Nile turned to blood	Abel's blood crying out after the first murder.	So many more who have died are crying out.
2. Swarms of frogs	On Day 5, God said, "Let the waters swarm with living creatures."	God called the first swarms good, but this swarm destroys.
3. Gnats or lice coming up from the dust	God created the first human "from the dust of the ground."	Dust was first used to give life to humans, but the dust covering them now creates misery.
4. Flies fill the land	On Day 6, God told humans to "fill the earth."	Humans were meant to fill the land as caretakers, but these flies destroy the land.
5. Livestock die	God created animals as helpers for the first human.	All the animals that help humans, livestock, die.
6. Boils	There was no disease at the beginning when all was good.	Now people are getting sick.
7. Hail	The first human was put in the Garden "to work it and care for it."	The hail destroys all the crops.
8. Locusts	On Day 3, God said, "Let the land produce vegetation."	After this plagues, there is nothing green left in all of Egypt.
9. Darkness	On Day 1, the first thing God said was, "Let there be light," and separated light from the darkness.	Everything becomes dark again. All of creation has been undone!

What does it mean that Creation is undone? In the Flood, God undid Creation because humans are killing each other. Why does God undo Creation this time? What does that tell you about God and the value God puts on life?

Like the first plague, what previous action of Pharaoh does the final plague remind you of?

Pharaoh ordered the killing of all the male Hebrew children. Now many of the male Egyptian children will die. Do you think this is fair? Do you think it's right? Why hasn't Pharaoh listened so far? Do you think this will get him to listen?

Sometimes it's hard time listening. What does it take to get you to listen to what others want? What makes listening so hard? How do you get powerful people to listen when you need help?

What is the importance of a new calendar?

The Israelites' calendar is now going to center on God's saving action. Every year will begin by remembering how God saved them from slavery and freed them from bondage. God's love and kindness toward the Hebrew people will become the first thing they remember every year.

When the lamb is sacrificed, what happens to the meat?

The people eat the meat as a feast. Sometimes we think of sacrifice as "barbaric" or "wasteful", imagining these animals are killed for nothing. Instead, sacrifice was a way of thanking God and praying prior to taking a life needed for food. And sacrifice was particularly a way of celebrating the goodness of God, because the meat would be used to provide for a feast – like how many people buy turkeys to celebrate Thanksgiving. The Israelites are celebrating, because tonight God is freeing them from slavery. How do you celebrate? What's your favorite feast foods? What things has God done for you, your family, or our community that are worth celebrating?

How are the people supposed to eat the Passover meal?

Dressed like they are going on a journey. Normally people take their shoes and coats off at home, but they are to have them on so that they are ready to go.

What do the Egyptians give the Israelites as they leave?

Their valuables. The people are so ready for the Israelites to leave that they even pay them to get out of there.

How is the Lord guiding the people?

A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. This pillar will stay with the Israelites throughout their 40-year journey in the Wilderness, guiding them along the way. How would you feel if God guided you with such a powerful symbol? How does God guide us today?

Why does Pharaoh change his mind?

As a king, it would be hard to give up such an important labor force. Even though God has shown Pharaoh such great power, Pharaoh doesn't want to let go of his power. Why is power so hard to give up?

Do the Israelites trust God after all those miracles?

No. Clearly not. Why do you think the Israelites doubt God?

Again, what action from Pharaoh does this recall?

First Pharaoh drowned the Hebrew children in the river. Now he's drowned in the sea. How do you feel about this moment? God gave Pharaoh a lot of chances, and still he wanted to enslave and kill people. What do you think God should have done?

How long can a human go without water?

About 3 days. And it's been 3 days. But what does God do when the people ask for help?

Do the Israelites trust God yet?

No! After all this, they still don't trust. What is their problem?

What's the point of a test?

Like with Abraham, tests are meant for good. This is an opportunity for the Israelites to show their faith in God. But tests from God are more than opportunities to pass or fail. God's tests are meant to help strengthen our trust. Each time Abraham was tested, he grew to trust God more. This test is meant to help the Israelites trust God more. How is this test going to increase their faith?

Did the Israelites pass the test?

Some do, but some don't. Why don't they do what God tells them to do?

What is the Sabbath?

The Sabbath comes from the Creation story, where God rested on the 7th day. Traditionally, the Sabbath is Friday night through Saturday (sundown to sundown); Jewish people still celebrate the Sabbath like that. Christians often celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday because that was the day Jesus rose from the dead.

How long did God provide food?

For 40 years. We'll learn more about why later, but the Israelites are in the Wilderness for 40 years. And just like the pillar of cloud and fire, during those 40 years God provides food for the Israelites every day (except on the Sabbath).

Do the Israelites trust God now?

No. What do you think it will take for the Israelites to trust God? Honestly, this is the story of all humans, and the whole Bible will be a story of humans not trusting God even as God remains faithful to humans. No matter how much God does for us, we have a hard time trusting. But just like with the Israelites, God will always remain faithful.

LET'S SUMMARIZE!

Answer each question yourself. I've put in some of my answers but remember: Our answers don't have to be the same. You may have heard and seen things I didn't even notice!

What is God doing in this story?

Guiding. Sending signs. Judging. Showing power. Undoing creation. Defending. Saving. Freeing. Getting frustrated. Feeding. Providing resources.

What does this story tell me about God?

God cares for people who are being oppressed. God gives people many opportunities to stop doing bad things. God can always be trusted.

What does this story tell me about me?

It's really easy for me to switch from praising God to complaining to God back to praising back to complaining. Rather than trusting God in hard times, most people's opinions of God vary according to how things are going in their own lives. When things are good, God is good; when things are bad, it must mean God is bad.

What does this story tell me about my relationship with God?

When I don't listen to God, God may do things to try to get my attention. I may have a hard time trusting God, especially when things look bad. God may test me. God remains faithful.

CONVERSATIONS – THE APOSTLES' CREED

What do you think it means to be seated at the right hand of the Father?

Jesus has been put in a position of trust. Joseph was at the right hand of Pharaoh. Jesus now has all the authority of God.

What more would you want to say about Jesus?

I think the most important thing to say about Jesus is that he's our friend.