



“This is the Story...”

Written by Talashia Keim Yoder and Daniel Yoder. Artwork by Christa and Jonathan Reuel.
Song lyrics and music by Jonathan Reuel.

Week 7: I'll be with you; I am who I am

Exodus 2-4

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/B2i97lxT1zY>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called Abraham and Sarah to be in a covenant relationship with God. God continued God's work with Isaac and Rebekah and with their sons Jacob and Esau. The family of God continued to be messy and complicated with Jacob's twelve sons and their poor treatment of their brother Joseph. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God kept God's promises to make them a blessing to the whole world.

- **Key verses:** Exodus 2:24; Exodus 3:12, Exodus 3:14

Tell the story: Jacob's descendents continued to live in Egypt, and eventually a king, a Pharaoh, who did not know the story of Joseph came to power. So these descendents, now called "Israelites," were put into slavery. There were so many of them that Pharaoh got nervous and ordered that every male baby should be killed. The women of the story rebelled against that order, from the midwives to a woman named Jochobed. Jochobed put her little baby boy into a basket on the river to save his life. He was found and raised by the Pharaoh's daughter, but as he grew older, he identified with his people and didn't like the way they were being treated. One day, he killed an Egyptian, and he had to flee to Midian. God heard the cries of the Israelites in Egypt. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and called him to lead the people out of slavery. This seemed like an impossible task, but God answered each of Moses' questions and prepared him for his calling.

- Read Exodus 2-4 OR Exodus 2:1-10; 2:23-3:15, 4:1-5, and 4:10-17
- Read pages 40-44 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - We read this story quickly, but a lot of time actually passes from the beginning of the story to Moses' return to Egypt! As you read it, try to get a rough guess of the time frame. Do you think the people felt like God was acting quickly enough when they cried out for help?
 - Read Exodus 3:1-6 and imagine it happening. How would you react if this happened to you?
 - Notice in Exodus 4:4 that God tells Moses to grab the snake by its tail. Should you ever grab a venomous snake by the tail?!
 - Notice that Moses has a lot of questions and excuses for why he may not be the person for this task! If you're intrigued by this or identify with this, make a list of them. And then notice God's response in Exodus 4:11-12. In *The Hebrew Bible*, Robert Alter translates this, "Who gave man a mouth...Is it not I, the Lord?"
- **Background information:**
 - Women feature prominently in this story. It is unusual for women to be as front-and-center as they are here. If you're intrigued by this, go back to Exodus 1:15, and read from there through Exodus 4, tracking the role women play in this story. Women preserve the people of God.

- “Moses” is Egyptian for “give birth,” and it is joined here with Hebrew etymology (“to draw out from water”). How does this name foreshadow what is to come in Moses’ life?
- Notice in Genesis 2:24 that it says that God remembered God’s covenant. Does this mean that God ever forgot it? The Hebrew word here is *zakar*, a more nuanced word than we think of with “remember.” It doesn’t mean God forgot about it, then shuffled through the filing cabinets of God’s memory and said, “Oh yeah, there was that covenant...” Rather it means that God remained committed to the covenant and kept the covenant.
- Another interesting word interpretation comes in the last word of Exodus 2. The NRSV says “God took notice of them,” but a more precise interpretation is “God knew.” Because it’s vague, translators have shied away from it. Read Exodus 2:25 with this new word. How does that change what you hear?
- Mount Horeb is Mount Sinai. File that information away...
- Why does Moses ask for God’s name? In Moses’ world, gods are identified by their names - “God” is a generic name. Moses is going to need a specific name to give to the people. And God answers with divine mystery. “I-Will-Be-Who-I-Will-Be,” or in the shortened version, “I-Will-Be.” God’s very name indicates the freedom of God. This name is considered so holy that in Jewish tradition, it is not spoken. In Christian tradition, we tend to respect that by writing “LORD” where this holy name for God would be. When you see “LORD” in the Bible, you know that the Hebrew being translated is the holy name for God.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - Moses was born to a Hebrew family, adopted by an Egyptian princess, raised for his formative years by his Hebrew family, then lived as a son of the royal family. Then he fled as a Hebrew and joined the family of a Midianite. In a time of tribal identity, this is a pretty mixed-up story. How do you think these multiple cultures prepared Moses to do the task he was called to? How do you imagine his identity might have been shaped by his three families?
 - Read Exodus 3:8. The people listed here are the people who already inhabit this land being promised to the Israelites. This is a little squirmy. Wrestle with that.

Microsong: “I’ll be with you; I am who I am” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/akaJszOMHwY>)
 God’s family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses who asks “Why me?” And “What’s Your name?” “I’ll be with you; I am who I am”

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/lqYdDf5cX3o>)
 This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.
 Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood
 and a rainbow sign, God’s love written on skin and sky,
And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh
 A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is
 saved from famine.
 God’s family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.
God loves every one of us, it’s true, and God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!



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Week 8: By the Sea God Saves Them

Exodus 7-15

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/Ve7k3O3Ah3s>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, to be in a covenant relationship with God. God’s work continued with three more generations from this family. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God was faithful. The story of Joseph brought the family to the land of Egypt, where generations later, they became slaves. God heard their cries for help and raised up a new leader, Moses.

- **Key verses:** Exodus 9:1; Exodus 14:13-14; Exodus 14:2

Tell the story: Moses and his brother Aaron returned to Egypt. God spoke to Moses, and Aaron provided the voice to the Pharaoh and to the people. God performed signs and wonders through Moses, but Pharaoh wouldn’t let the people go. So followed the nine signs and wonders, plagues in the natural world, like swarms of flies, bloody water, thunder and hail, and darkness for days. When these nine failed to change Pharaoh’s mind, a plague was sent. The people of God followed Moses’ instructions and were protected from it, but the Egyptians did not, and the firstborn of each of their households died. At this, the Hebrew people were finally able to flee. Pharaoh came after them, but God parted the Red Sea so the people could walk through on dry land. When the Egyptians tried to follow, the sea closed over them. The people were free on the other side. This is the story of God’s great act of deliverance, the story that is celebrated each year with the festival of Passover. God always remembers God’s people, and God is the great deliverer. God, who sticks with the people, fights their battles for them.

- Read Exodus 7:1-13; Exodus 7:20-8:15; Exodus 9:22-10:11; 12:21-42; 14:5-29.
- Read pages 46-48 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - As you read these stories, pay attention to your responses to them. What makes you squirm? Laugh? Cheer? Get grossed out?
 - Read this story using your senses. What does it look like? Smell like? Sound like? Feel like? Taste like?
 - Notice that sometimes the Pharaoh’s magicians can match the signs from God. What do you make of that? Is there any difference between how the signs and wonders happen for Aaron and Moses and how they happen for the magicians?
 - Notice that multiple times, scripture says that “God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” What in the world do you think that means? Did God not want Pharaoh to let the people go?
 - Read Exodus 7:14-19. This is another one of those times that the story gets a little repetitive, combining two different ways of telling the story.
 - Notice that there’s a rhythm to this story not unlike the rhythm of Genesis 1. Why do you think that might be?
 - If you’re intrigued by the signs and wonders, consider reading through Exodus 7:14-11:10. Chart out the signs and wonders and see if you can find the patterns in them.

- **Background information:**
 - Aaron and Moses don't actually ask the Pharaoh to free the people. They ask for a 3-day leave. The hope is that this will be granted to them, and the people will be able to flee this way. It wasn't uncommon in the ancient world to grant a request like this. How would the story of the people of God have been different if Pharaoh had said, "Sure," and that would have been it?
 - We often use the phrase "ten plagues," but this phrase is not actually used in the Bible. The people would have understood plagues to be an epidemic, a deadly disease sent as a punishment. These do not fit that criteria. They were signs and wonders, sent to show Pharaoh (and the people) how powerful God was. How does this understanding change your reading of the text?
 - Were all of the people who fled slavery in Egypt descendants of Jacob? Probably not. Exodus 12:38 says a "mixed crowd" went with them. The English word that probably comes closest to the Hebrew "erevraḅ" here is "riffraff" (Alter, vol. 1, pg. 263). This was probably a mixed group of people. Their common story of God's deliverance made them one people.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - This story of God's deliverance from bondage was an identifying story during the period of United States history when slavery was legal. It is not difficult to understand why slaves in the US identified with the Hebrew people. Look up and listen to some of the music of this time, songs like "Go Down Moses." These songs were sung to encourage and to carry messages. Drawing the parallel between the ancient story and the more modern story can remind us that God is always on the side of the oppressed. And that we are intricately tied together in this big story of God - it is not linear, but cyclical.
 - Water plays a big role in the Moses narrative. Find places in this story where water is central. Why do you think water keeps coming into the story like this?
 - In Exodus 14:10-12, the Israelites complain and regret having left Egypt. This will be a recurring theme! Instead of being critical of their lack of faith, put yourself in their place and talk about how they might have felt in this moment, when they didn't yet have a full picture of what God was up to.
 - Read Exodus 14:13-14. What does this tell us about how God works? What does it tell us about our role in the "battle" situations of life?

Microsong: "By the Sea God Saves Them" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/pLHzzOLIH0U>)
 Moses meets with Egypt's leader. Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" God's people leave, then the troops chase them. By the sea God saves them.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/4oICEvGLr0o>)
 This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.
 Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood
 and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,
And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh
 A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is
 saved from famine.
 God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.
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Week 9: Daily Food and Ten New Rules

Exodus 16, 20:1-17

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/y4QTDvAj0vg>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, to be in a covenant relationship with God. God’s work continued with three more generations from this family. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God was faithful. When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God performed many signs and wonders, and delivered them from slavery.

- **Key verses:** Exodus 16:12; Exodus 16:29-30; Exodus 20:2

Tell the story: The people had been saved from slavery - now what? It’s time for God to get to work at forming a people. These people have a lot to learn about this God that they worship! They learn to trust God’s leading and God’s provision. God gives them the gift of the law, a set of guidelines that will free them to live as God’s people in *shalom* community.

- Read Exodus 16, 20:1-17
- Read pages 51-53 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Notice the times the people complain - and God’s responses to their complaints. Do you think it’s okay that they complain?
 - Notice what happens to the food when the people hoard it. Is this instructive for us?
 - Read Exodus 20:2. This is the God the people serve, and this is why they can trust God. Wonder: What would God say to you in a statement like this?
 - Notice which two commandments get the longest explanations. Why do you think this is?
 - The commandments given in Exodus 20:1-17 are designed to enable the people to live in right relationships with each other. Notice the ways these instructions could help that happen.
- **Background information:**
 - Mount Sinai is Mount Horeb. We’ve been here before!
 - Notice how manna is described in Exodus 16:31. We can only guess at what it was like. There are several ideas for what this manna might have been, and it was probably something natural of the area the people found themselves in. Try foraging on the land around you to see what sustenance God provides for you.
 - The law that God gives the people (what we know as the Ten Commandments, plus a lot of other stuff) is celebrated as a great gift. This is what is celebrated at Shavuot (known as Pentecost in Greek).
- **Conversation starters:**
 - Imagine eating the same thing every day for forty years. Would you ever complain?

- In the story of the manna and quail, the people are learning that God provides. They learn to trust that there will be enough for everyone if each person only takes their share. This seems simple enough, but what would it be like to actually live that way?
- Why is the law a gift? Can boundaries and rules be freeing for us?
- Shalom community is a term we often use for the kind of people that the Hebrews were learning to be. It means a community where everyone has enough, where relationships with God, each other, and creation are all healthy. It is possible through trust in God and love for each other. This is radical! How does the way you live fit (or not fit) the concept of shalom community?

Microsong: “Daily Food and Ten New Rules” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/p1aCEkQjAgg>)
 The people complain. God rains bread. Daily food. Ten new rules.
 The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.

Sing the big song: (Listen: https://youtu.be/5UwxkVEt_zc)
 This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.
 Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood
 and a rainbow sign, God’s love written on skin and sky,
And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh
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Week 10: Give Them Land, Amend the Law

Numbers 27:1-11

Intro Video: https://youtu.be/KZhsz_jXw4

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, to be in a covenant relationship with God. God's work continued with three more generations from this family. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God was faithful. When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God performed many signs and wonders, and delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God's provision and living out God's commandments in shalom community.

- **Key verses:** Numbers 27:7-8

Tell the story: We come now to a story of just one of the things the people of God needed to figure out: land allotment. Land is to be divided out between clans and passed from generation to generation through the male line. A man named Zelophehad, from the tribe of Joseph, had died. He had no sons, so by law his name and land would die instead of being passed on to his five daughters. These daughters, named Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah, bravely stood before the leaders and asked for a change in the law. Moses took their case to God, who said they were in the right. The law was changed. Learning to be the people of God meant wrestling with the rules and being open to changing them.

- Read Numbers 27:1-11
- Read page 65 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Notice who all the sisters had to stand before to plead their case. How do you think they felt?
 - These women are all named (here and in Numbers 26:33). That is not common in the Bible. Say their names out loud.
- **Background information:**
 - Women did not have many rights in the ancient world. The fact that these sisters could plead their case - and that they got the law changed - is a big deal! Even in modern times, many women have not been able to inherit property.
 - In verse 3, the daughters say that their father was not one of those who gathered against the Lord "in the company of Korah." This refers to an uprising detailed in Numbers 16. Their father's "offense" was most likely the same as all the adults who didn't believe that God could bring them into the promised land - a much more minor offense than being part of the rebellion.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - Bryan Moyer Suderman has written an excellent song called "Daughters of Zelophahad," in which he uses the phrase, "It's time to look again." This story reminds us that boundaries and rules are negotiable. Sometimes, we need to look again to see if they still

are helping us to live in the way of God. See what that concept sparks in your imagination. What do we need to look at again in our current time?

- Do you think this change in the law brought the ways of the people of God closer to God's dream for them?

Microsong: "Give Them Land, Amend the Law" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/2lCdv6-Wtnk>)

Five sisters come and ask for land when Israel divides up Canaan. God says "What they ask is right. Give them land; Amend the law."

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/8hKf5GLGi5w>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.

Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood
and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh

A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is
saved from famine.

God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.

Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Ahhhhhhhhh.

The people complain. God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.

Five sisters come and ask for land. God says "Yes, amend the law!"

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Week 11: Then, Now and Always

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/GaR0Uc0-OXU>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, to be in a covenant relationship with God. God’s work continued with three more generations from this family. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God was faithful. When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God performed many signs and wonders, and delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision and living out God’s commandments in shalom community. The daughters of Zelophahad show us that sometimes living in God’s way meant wrestling with the law and changing it.

- **Key verses:** Deuteronomy 6:4-6

Tell the story: After forty years of learning to be a shalom community, the people are getting ready to go to the promised land. This is a time of preparation. When they are no longer living in this wilderness of total dependence on God, how will they carry on as the people of God? This passage, known as the *shema* (which means, “Hear!”), or the great commandment, is what they are to remember above anything else. The commandment is love.

- Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9
- Read page 67 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - “Keep these words.” This is a powerful phrase. We actually considered naming this series with this phrase! Notice how the people are instructed to keep these words. Is it just by memorizing them? Notice the embodied knowledge of this commandment. If you really did this, how would it change your life?
 - Sometimes in our world, we think we need experts to teach our children to follow God. Is that what this passage seems to say? Where are we supposed to learn these words?
 - Is Deuteronomy 4:5 familiar?
- **Background information:**
 - This passage is a really big deal. Pieces of it come up again and again throughout the Bible. If you’re intrigued by this, look up “*shema*” and learn about how these words are still kept in Jewish tradition.
 - The Bible was written in a polytheistic (many gods) world. This text doesn’t concern itself with refuting the idea of other gods, but instead focuses on the commandment to worship only one god, the true God. It is a declaration of monotheism.
 - Until now, people have been told to fear God. Now they are told to love God with all their heart, being and might. The NRSV translates the Hebrew *nefesh* as “soul,” but it more literally means “life-breath” or “essential self” (Alter, vol 1, 641). In modern times, the word “soul” is associated with body/soul dualism, so it might be helpful to use one of these other terms instead.

- **Conversation starters:**

- The big commandment here is to love God with our whole being. Why should we do that? What does it mean for our lives if we do?
- How can you “keep these words”?

Microsong: “Then, Now and Always” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/8CPioJvZqt0>)

Hear and do these words when you begin your life across the Jordan. Write them on your hearts, get them inside you and then teach your children. Love and worship God with your whole being, with your whole heart. And with all you have, in awe remember God is one, then, now and always, God is one, only God.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/f1e1laVDQ84>)

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Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and a rainbow sign, God’s love written on skin and sky,

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh

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The people complain. God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.

Five sisters come and ask for land. God says “Yes, amend the law!”

Moses says, “In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!”

God loves every one of us, it’s true, and God loves the universe.

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