



“This is the Story...”

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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 "erevra" 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.  
*Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Ahhhhhhhhh.*  
*God loves every one of us, it's true, and God loves the universe.*

**Go do your household project!**