

LESSON 5

THE EXODUS

LESSON NOTES

FOCUS: PASSOVER OF GOD'S PEOPLE (EXODUS 11:1–15:21)

- SACRED STORY
- CORE PRESENTATION

THE MATERIAL

- LOCATION: SACRED STORY SHELVES
- PIECES: DESERT BOX, PEOPLE OF GOD FIGURES, BLUE FELT, MATZO
- UNDERLAY: NONE

BACKGROUND

God was with the People as they “went out” (the literal meaning of the word *exodus*) from slavery into freedom through the water. The People of God have looked back to this time to sustain them when God is hidden and they feel lost. For the Jews, especially, the Feast of Passover keeps alive this core event. For Christians, Baptism reawakens this event, especially when commemorated in the Easter Vigil, celebrated on the eve of Easter by some denominations.

In these stories, we continue to evoke the People’s experiences of God’s elusive presence. These moments of high drama reveal the complexity of such experiences and provide a narrative of their richness. This not only gives children an appropriate language to name, express and value their own experiences but also permission to talk aloud about them.

NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

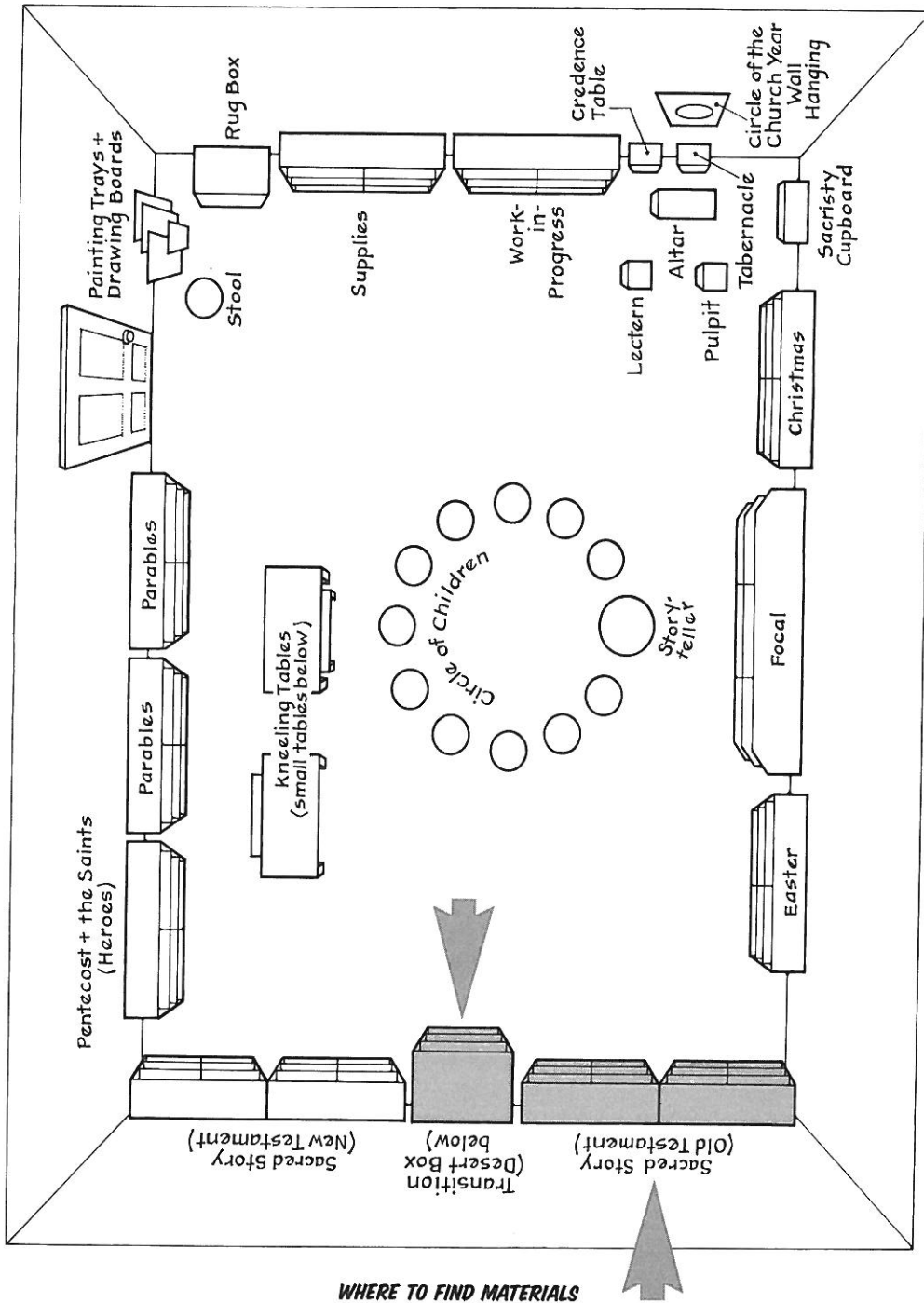
Locate the tray that holds this material on the sacred story shelves, to the right of the story of the Great Family as you face the shelves. On the tray, you’ll find one basket that holds the People of God and two blue felt strips rolled up separately to represent the water. Also include a basket of *matzo*, the flat bread eaten by the Jewish People at the Passover. (From now on, have *matzo* available for children to eat, if they choose, each week.) Choose one figure from the People of God to represent Moses.

The basket that holds the People of God provides the people figures for several lessons that follow (the Ten Best Ways, the Ark and the Tent, the Exile and Return, etc.). In the story of Abraham and Sarah, the Great Family became present. God's People will now journey in the lessons as they do in fact—then, now and beyond. Therefore, keep plenty of small, wooden figures in this basket.

SPECIAL NOTES

Storytelling tips: When you prepare this story, you'll find that it “telescopes” or shortens the story of the journey into Egypt for food, omitting the details of the story of Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 42ff). The story of Joseph belongs in an object box, since it is about an individual's encounter with God rather than the People's encounter. You'll find more information about making and using object boxes on pages 22 and 72 in *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 1: How to Lead Godly Play Lessons*.

Another example of “telescoping,” occurs during the narrative of the plagues. Rather than list the plagues—blood, frogs, gnats, flies, animals dying, boils, hail, locusts and darkness—we simply say “many strange things happened in the land,” because the list often distracts children from the primary narrative.



MOVEMENTS

Go and get the desert box and bring it to the circle. Leave the cover on the desert box until you are ready to begin the lesson.

When you have the desert box in place, go to get the tray with the Exodus material.

Bring the tray back to the circle and place it beside you. Now introduce the desert box to the children. This must be done carefully each time the desert box is part of a lesson.

Do not take off the lid until you are settled in the circle and the children are ready. The desert box is so exciting to some children, that you may want to wait to remove the lid until after you have introduced it.

Remove the lid. Move your hand over the desert as you talk. When you mention how the wind changes the shape of the desert, take your hand and move the sand into new shapes.

Take out some of the people and begin to place them in the sand to your left.

Continue to put people in the sand as you tell about the need to leave Canaan and go to Egypt.

Move the people across the desert, from left to right. Move them slowly, a few at a time, and reform the group several times on their way. Don't put more people into the sand than you can cover with two hands, because you will use that gesture when God's People become trapped.

WORDS

■ This lesson needs the desert box. Watch carefully, so you will always know where it is and how to get it out.

■ Watch carefully where I go. Watch. Do you see the lesson? Here it is.

■ This is the desert. It's not the whole desert. It is only a piece of the desert. We need part of the desert in our classroom, because so many important things happened there to the People of God.

■ The desert is a dangerous place. There is no food. There is no water. People die without food and water.

■ Nothing grows there, so when the wind blows, the shape of the desert changes. People lose their way.

■ The desert is a dangerous place. People do not go there unless they have to. It takes courage to go into the desert.

■ The People of God were living in a place where the rains did not come. The crops had no water, so they could not grow. There was no grain to grind to make bread. Everyone was hungry. The children cried in their sleep. So their mothers and fathers decided to go to a new land where there was food. They had to go even if it was across the desert. Their journey began.

■ It was hard in the desert, but they kept going toward the land called Egypt.

MOVEMENTS

Move all the people to your right for their journey. This is because they will return in the next lesson from your upper right to your lower left, where you will place the rock for Mt. Sinai. When all the figures are in Egypt, pause.

Put your two hands over the people with your fingers touching the sand.

Remove your hands and put Moses in the sand close to you somewhere in the one-third of the desert box to your right.

Each time the Pharaoh says, "No," hold your hand up flat between you and Moses. (You are taking the role of the Pharaoh in this dialogue.)

Hold out your hand again as if the Pharaoh is going to say, "No," but then let it crumple.

WORDS

◆ In the land of Egypt the king was called a Pharaoh.

◆ When the people came into the land of Egypt, they found food and work, but the Pharaoh trapped them. They could not go home again.

They had to do what the Pharaoh said. They had to live where the Pharaoh said. They had to get up when the Pharaoh said. They had to go to bed when the Pharaoh said. They had to eat what the Pharaoh said. They had to do the work the Pharaoh said. They had to do everything the Pharaoh said. They were slaves.

◆ One of the people, whose name was Moses, came to the Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go."

◆ The Pharaoh said, "No."

Moses went back many times to tell the Pharaoh to let his people go, but the Pharaoh always said, "No."

Then many strange things happened in the land, but the Pharaoh always said, "No." Then something terrible happened. The oldest boy in each Egyptian family, even in the family of the Pharaoh, died.

The oldest boys in the families of the People of God did not die, because the people made a mark on the doors of their houses. They put the blood of a lamb there, and the Angel of Death passed over them.

◆ When Moses went back this time and said, "Let my people go," the Pharaoh said, "Yes."

MOVEMENTS

Show the basket of matzo to the children.

Turn the people around and begin to move them from your right to your left. Move them about halfway across the desert box.

Put down the two pieces of blue felt. They are of about equal length and meet in the middle of the desert box. Use your hand to suggest the "pushing" of the people "against" the water.

Fold each piece of felt back about an inch to make a passage through the water. Take the people through one at a time.

WORDS

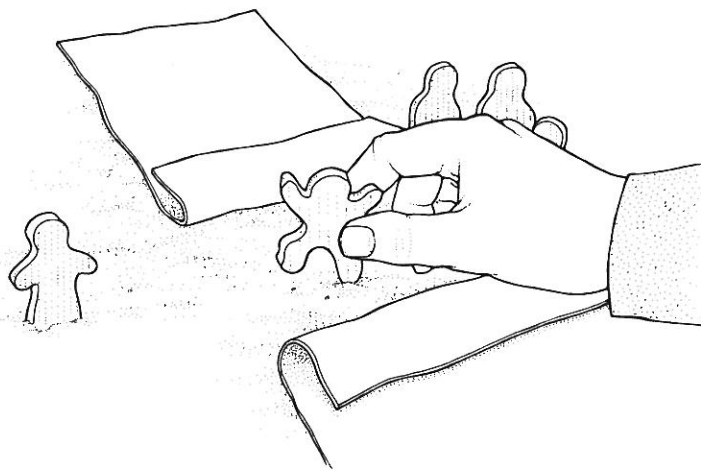
The people began to hurry to get everything ready. They packed all they could carry, and they baked bread for the journey. There was no time to put leaven in the bread and let it sit, so it would swell up and get big and fluffy like the bread you buy in the store. It was flat.

You can still eat this bread today. It is called *matzo*. Whenever you taste it, you can still taste this story.

The people went as fast as they could. They were afraid the Pharaoh would change his mind. Suddenly they heard the sound they did not want to hear. The ground began to shake. The Pharaoh's army was coming after them. The beating of the horses' hooves, and the rolling of the chariots sounded like thunder!

The army of the Pharaoh pushed the people against the water. They did not know what to do.

God came so close to Moses and Moses came so close to God that he knew how to take the people through the water into freedom.



MOVING THE PEOPLE THROUGH THE WATER (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

MOVEMENTS

Look at the different figures and imagine how each one might feel. You might even say something like:

If there is time and the children are settled, you might pass around the basket of the People of God figures and have each child select one to bring through the water to the other side. Fold the felt back into the original position after all the people have passed through.

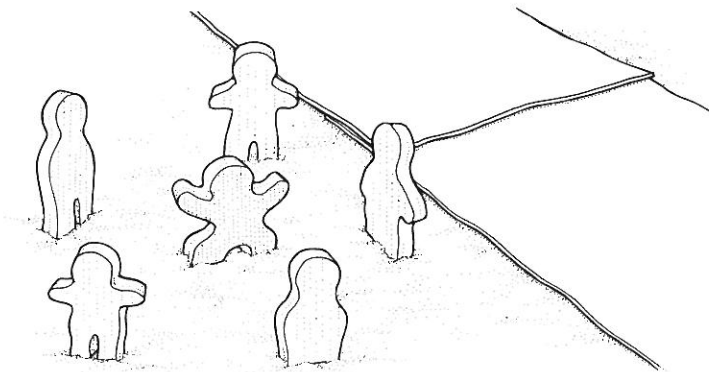
As the people come through the water to the other side, form them into a circle. Save one of the figures for Miriam. Place her in the center when the dancing begins.

WORDS

■ This one looks so scared he can barely move. This one is running. This one is happy. This one is confused.

■ When all the people were safe on the other side, the water closed behind them and they were free! The army of the Pharaoh could not get them.

■ Now all of the people were free on the other side. They were so happy they just had to give thanks to God, and Miriam led the dancing!



MIRIAM AND THE PEOPLE DANCE (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

Enjoy the story for a moment in silence. It is then time to begin the wondering.

■ I wonder what part of this story you liked best?

I wonder what part of the story is the most important?

I wonder what part of the story is about you or who you are in the story?

I wonder if there is any part of the story we can leave out and still have all the story we need?

MOVEMENTS

When the wondering is drawing to a close, pick up the basket of matzos and show it to the children.

Help the children pass the basket around and support them while they wait. When the basket is all the way around, take matzo for yourself.

Put the lesson back. Put the matzo basket on the shelf below it. Return the desert box to its place.

Begin to go around the circle to help the children choose their work.

WORDS

This is like the flat bread the people made so quickly. You can still eat it today. Whenever you taste this bread, you taste this story. This is the bread of the Passover Feast. It is called "matzo."

I am going to pass it around. Every one of you may have a piece. Remember to wait to taste it until everyone is served. It is more fun to have a feast all together.

That's the way. You know how to do this. Good. That's right. We need to wait. Good. It is more fun to wait until everyone is served.

Now let's enjoy the matzo all together. Taste the story. Taste how the people went through the water into freedom. You can almost taste the excitement.

Yes. There is nothing in the bread except flour and water. They had to hurry. There is no leaven in the bread to make it get big and fluffy like the bread you buy in the store. This is unleavened bread. What you taste is the story.

Watch carefully when I put this basket back. You can have all the matzo you want in our classroom. Remember to pass the basket around to everyone first. You also need to remember to taste the story.

If the basket is empty, come and get one of the teachers to fill it.

Now watch. I am going to put all of this lesson back.

What work would you like to get out today?