

Whose Slave Are You?

CHARACTERS: 3 women, 1 female child, 6 men, 6 either; doubling possible

PROPS: Rope, chain, ring, robe, scepter, basin, pitcher of water, towel

COSTUMES: Biblical, except Greek Chorus. They can be in all black or Greek robes

SETTING: Bare Stage with movable chairs

Cast

Hagar	Pharaoh 2	Centurion's Servant
Joseph	Puah	Pig Feeder
Pharaoh 1	Battle Slave	Jesus
Shiprah	Namaan's Slave	

Greek Chorus – Typically stand up right on bare stage. May move forward to speak or act. Typically observes and comments without emotion. Within the chorus are parts for a leader and 4 soloists.

Scene 1 – Egypt

HAGAR: (*Bitter, harsh*) Who does Sarai think she is? Sending me to the bed of her husband? It's not enough I clean and sew and dress her body and her hair? She has to own and use every inch of me, not just my hands and feet and back (*Choking back a sob*) but my womb as well? (*Pauses to collect herself*)

Can you blame me from running away? I carry the child she so desperately wants and yet she mistreats me. I had to flee from her wrath.

(*Harsh, distraught*) It is not enough that she beats me and uses me as one would use a breeding animal. (*Sobbing*) She will take my child from me. Does she think she can rip him from my arms and claim him as her own! How can I bear this? (*Falls to her knees, hands reaching to heaven, sobs racking her body*)

Greek Chorus

Leader: Go back to your mistress, Hagar. (*Hagar bows her head, holds her stomach*)

1: Submit to her.

2: You are now with child and you will have a son.

3: You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard your misery.

4: The Lord shall increase your descendants until they are too numerous to count. (*Hagar rises and exits*)

JOSEPH: (*Angry*) My brothers sold me as a slave! For 20 pieces of silver. That's bad enough, but they sold me to some Ishmaelites. (*Disgusted*) Ishmael was the son of my great grandmother's slave (*Soberly*)

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It gets worse. The Ishmaelites sold me to an Egyptian named Potipher. Ishmael's slave mother was Egyptian. Talk about irony.

(Looking up) God, how could you let this happen to me? Wasn't it you that sent those dreams that I would be a ruler? The sun, moon and stars all bowed before me. *(Crying)* Didn't you send that? I thought you did. *(Pause to stop the tears)* But now all I am is somebody's slave. *(Small sob escapes)* My future is gone. My hope is gone. I am a slave. *(Crumbles to the ground, kneeling, head bowed, arms spread out on the ground in submission to an unseen master)*

Greek Chorus

Leader: We know the plans He has for you

1: Plans to prosper you and not to harm you

2: Plans to give you hope and a future. *(3 and 4 raise Joseph up, robe him give him a ring and scepter. Joseph moves in front of the curtain as he examines the three items, Greek chorus following. The curtain closes)*

JOSEPH: *(Understanding)* It was not my brothers who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. God intended it for good to save of many lives *(Curtain)*

Leader: Now Joseph died but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly.

1: Egypt was filled with them.

2: Then a new king,

3: Who did not know about Joseph,

4: Came to power in Egypt *(They exit, single file)*

At rise: All four characters are on the stage. Spotlights can be used or characters can lift head and step forward to draw the audience's attention. Greek Chorus moves to up right, observing)

(Curtain opens. Pharaohs and midwives are set on stage. They freeze, head down until it is their turn)

PHARAOH 1: *(Concerned)* These Israelites are multiplying faster than flies. No, not flies. Flies are an annoyance. They multiply like locusts. Swarms of locusts that will descend on Egypt and eat our crops and leave us to starve.

(Heartlessly to unseen minions) Use them ruthlessly. Use them up. Make their lives bitter with hard labor. Let them build store cities for me, *(with pride)* the Pharaoh, the most powerful man in all of Egypt. No, in all the world.

SHIPHRAH: *(Leaning towards audience as if drawing them into her confidence to share a secret)*

Pharaoh has decided that when I help Hebrew women in childbirth I should kill the boys; but if it is a girl, let her live. What kind of a monster is he? Is it not enough that we toil under the sun, building his cities and pyramids? Is it not enough that the whip lashes us like we are cattle? Must he take away our only joy, our precious children as well?

(Drawing herself up straight, firm in her conviction) I am Shiphrah, Hebrew midwife, not Shiphrah, assassin for the Egyptians. They may force me to cook their food, wash their feet, accept their blows but they will never force me to kill the babies of my sisters, my friends, my daughters.

Never! *(Looking up and to the right at the Pharaoh)* Do you hear me Pharaoh? *(Raising her fist)*
NEVER!

PHARAOH 2: *(Exasperated to audience)* No matter what we do, the Hebrews multiply like rats and if we are not careful like rats they will gnaw away at Egypt until there is nothing left but these accursed Hebrews!. The more we oppress them, the more they spread. If war breaks out, those Hebrews will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country. *(Pounding his fist)* That must not happen.

(Slyly) But I will not kill them. No, they are far too useful as slave labor. *(To unseen minions)* Use the men ruthlessly. Use them up. Wear them out. Make them unable to raise their fists against us. *(Walking over to stand above the seated Puah who appears to be cowering)* When they give birth, kill the boys but keep the girls alive to serve us. *(Laughs at his own cleverness)*

PUAH: *(Some Outrage, some sarcasm)* I have new orders; despicable orders. *(Stands, looks around to make sure she is not overheard and directly to the audience, imitating the voice of Pharaoh)* Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live. *(Switches to own voice)* Those are the new orders.

The old orders weren't being obeyed so now we have the new orders. *(Mocking the voice of Pharaoh)* "Throw those babies in the river". So the crocodiles can feed on Hebrew flesh and blood? I think not. Do they think we fear them so much we would stand by, watching a helpless baby be swallowed by the Nile? I think not.

I may only be a slave. *(With as much pride as Pharaoh had)* But I am a Hebrew slave. I may be beaten, even killed for disobeying. But I, Puah the midwife, will not obey the Pharaoh. *(Resumes her position on the floor as if she is cowering and afraid)*

1: God was kind to the midwives

2: Because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own *(Midwives and Pharaohs exit, Leader steps before the curtain to deliver lines. Curtain closes)*

Leader: In His time, God delivered them from slavery using Moses, one born a slave, but adopted into Pharaoh's own family. Yet Moses did not consider this royalty something to cling to. When the time was right, he humbled himself and became a servant, a shepherd. In God's own time he was raised back up as a leader, one who brought the Hebrew slaves to the Promised Land. *(Exits)*

Scene 2 - Slaves of Israel

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At rise: Greek Chorus is up right stage. Two slaves are downstage. Namaan's slave is kneeling down left. Battle Slave is lying down right and struggles to his feet when the lights go up)

BATTLE SLAVE: What could be worse than being a slave? Being a worthless slave, that's what. Being a sick slave, unable to work or serve. A worthless piece of human refuse, taking up resources but not producing any.

I was slave to the Amalekites during the time of David. They were powerful raiders and had captured many to be made into slaves, including David's two wives. When I became ill, I was left behind.
(*Becoming increasingly upset*) Left to die in a field. Tossed aside like a broken pot or spoiled food.

(*Evoke pity*) For three days and nights I was Alone. Sick. Without food or water. (*Bitter*) Left to die. What kind of person does that to another person?

But David's men found me. They were kind to me and gave me water and food.

David asked "To whom do you belong, and where do you come from?"
I said, "I am an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me when I became ill three days ago.

David asked, "Can you lead me down to this raiding party?"
I answered. "Swear to me before God that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them." He swore and I took them to the raiders, enjoying their plunder. David wiped them out, but kept his word and spared my life.

After the battle I heard David praise his God declaring "One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: That you O God are strong and that you O Lord are loving." That's the kind of master I want to serve. One with power; (*Voice change*) one with compassion.

They say David led sheep before he led men. They say he never ran when the bear or the wolf came to prey upon his flock. A man who would save sheep, a man who would save a dying slave... that's the kind of master I want to serve.

I will serve him the rest of my life. (*Exits*)

NAAMAN'S SLAVE: (*Rises to standing, with a smile*) Back in my day, I was nothing. A nothing. I was young. Female. A slave. A Hebrew slave captured by our enemies from Aram and forced to serve the wife of the commander of those armies.

I could have been angry. I could have served grudgingly. I even could have done him and his family harm. I could have rejoiced that this powerful man and valiant soldier had leprosy. But I did not. Instead I chose to help him.

I said to my mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

Namaan took me words to heart, went to Elisha and was cured. Not only did his skin change but his heart as well. From that day forward, my Lord Namaan pledged himself to my Lord Jehovah and Jehovah alone.

Like Joseph before me I was young, enslaved against my will to a foreign people. Like Joseph. God used me; His power was displayed dramatically through a slave. Who would have thought that a slave, especially a young, female slave could help change the heart and soul of one who had been her enemy ? Who would have thought he would turn himself into a servant of the Lord Most High? God, that's who .
(Exits)

(Greek chorus moves in front of the curtain, which closes. They are arranged in a straight line facing the audience. Words in () denote an echo by the others. The words are barely louder than a stage whisper and seem to be carried on the wind)

Leader: Slaves, (Slaves) submit yourselves to your masters

1: Not just those who are good

2: Or considerate.

3: Or to win their favor

Leader: Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men

1: Slaves, (Slaves) obey your earthly masters with respect

2: and with sincerity of heart,

3: and reverence for the Lord

4: just as you would obey Christ.

Leader: Obey (Obey) them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, (Slaves of Christ)

1: Doing the will of God from your heart. (Pause)

2: Slaves, (Slaves) please your masters.

3: Do not talk back,

4: Do not steal,

Leader: Show that you can be fully trusted so that in every way you can make the teachings about God our Savior attractive. (Exit in a single file)

Scene 3 - New Testament Slaves

(At rise both are lying on the stage. In turn they rise to their feet to deliver their monologues)

CENTURION'S SERVANT: *(This needs to be delivered in contrast but with similarities to the battle servant's piece)* What could be worse than being a slave? Being a worthless slave, that's what. Being a paralyzed slave, unable to work, unable to serve. A worthless piece of human refuse, taking up resources but not producing any.

I was a servant to a Roman Centurion. Jews in general hated the powerful and cruel Romans. But my master was different. He was kind, and he valued me, a slave.

I was paralyzed and in terrible agony. My Roman master had compassion on me and humbled himself to seek the help of a Jewish rabbi. He asked Jesus, the son of David, the good shepherd, to heal me.

(Greek chorus steps forward) Leader: Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. Just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.

1: I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes;

2: I tell that one, 'Come,' and he comes.

3: I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.

Centurion's servant

(Exuding happiness) And at my master's request, Jesus healed me. It is good to serve a master with power. It is better to serve a master with compassion. It is best to serve one who has both. *(Exits)*

Leader: A man is a slave to whatever has mastered him

1: No servant can serve two masters.

2: Either he will hate the one and love the other

3: Or he will be devoted to one and despise the other

4: You cannot serve both God and money

PIG FEEDER:

At Rise: Pig feeder is center stage with Greek Chorus up right. Chorus watches and only after pig feeder exits do they step forward in sync to deliver their lines. Pig Feeder is lying down. Rises to his knees and pantomimes tossing food to pigs. He seems to become aware of the audience, stands, brushes himself off the best he can and addresses them)

Look at me. A pig feeder. A Jewish swineherd. I was once the son of a wealthy, powerful man. I had everything I wanted. And now, now all I want is to eat the pods I am feeding to these pigs!

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My father's servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! *(Desperately)* No one will give me anything to eat. *(Sinks to his knees and buries his face momentarily into his hands)* If I am to be a servant – let me be my father's servant. He has the resources to take care of my needs and I know he would be a kind master. *(Standing, less whine)*

I know what I will do. *(Stands, wiping nose on sleeve)* I will go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your servants. *(Sounding hopeful)* I am fortunate – not many slaves get to choose the master they will serve. Better his slave than anyone else's. *(Exits, Chorus steps in front of the curtain which close behind them. The Leader is stage right of the four members, body cheated toward them,; they are a little distance away, giving the impression they are a group facing the Leader)*

Leader: Choose this day whom you will serve.

All Chorus members: Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods!

1: It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt

2: From that land of slavery.

3: He protected us on our entire journey.

4: We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God *(All five turn to face the audience)*

ALL: As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. *(Exit single file)*

Scene 4 – Jesus, the servant

At rise: Cast members bring seats and arrange them in a semi circle at center stage One carries in pitcher of water and sets it stage left of the semi circle. They are seated as if they are Jesus' disciples but with their heads bowed throughout. Greek Chorus comes and binds their hands together with rope or chain, then take their places standing behind the semi circle.

Leader: Christ Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.

1: He made himself nothing.

2: He took the very nature of a servant, *(Jesus enters, carrying basin and towel)*

3: Being made in human likeness, appearing as a man ...*(Jesus gets the pitcher of water and pours it into the basin)*

4: He humbled himself and became obedient, even to a death on the cross.

Leader: It was just before the Passover Feast. *(Jesus takes off his outer clothing, and wraps a towel around his waist. He kneels, his back bearing whip marks and bloody signs of a flogging apparent to the audience. He begins to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around*

him.) Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

(As before, the words are spoken barely above a stage whisper and appear to be carried on the wind or by the Spirit. Words in () are echoes by the other members of the Greek Chorus. Pauses between speakers should allow 4 to finish exactly as Jesus does, no matter if double casting or not is used)

Leader: Whoever wants to become great must become a servant (Servant)

1: If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all. (Servant of all)

2: Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve (He came to serve)

3: And to give his life for many that they should become free (Become free)

4: He has set an example that we should do as He has done (Do as He has done)

(When Jesus finishes, he stands right stage of the semi circle. All “disciples” have their eyes lifted and riveted on Jesus.)

Jesus: Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you..

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. *(Jesus cross downstage left and the “disciples” eyes follow him. He puts back on his outer garment. Greek Chorus speaks powerfully)*

Leader: God sent his Son, to redeem us, so we are no longer slaves (No longer slaves)

1: He bought us with his own blood (Blood)

2: He was slain, and with his own blood purchased men for God (Purchased men for God)

3: We are not our own; we were bought at a price. (Bought)

4: We were bought at a price; we will not become slaves of men. (Bought at a price)

Jesus: *(Turning to the disciples and Chorus, holding out his arms to them)* Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

(In turn each of the characters, starting with the one the closest to Jesus, come to Jesus. They kneel, bowing their heads and raising their bound hands. Jesus tenderly removes their bonds and raises them to their feet. They may or may not hug him. (Jesus will pick up Namaan’s servant girl if possible and she will throw her arms around Jesus.) They will speak their lines to the audience then move back to down right. The next character moves toward Jesus as the one in front of them starts to move into place for the

ending. The Greek Chorus echoes words in () Characters should speak with emotion, either as their character would or as themselves)

Hagar: He freed those who, all their lives, were held as slaves. (held as slaves)

Joseph: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. (I'm free) Do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (I'm free)

Shiprah: Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. (Slave to sin) You have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God. (Free from sin, slaves of God)

Puah: You have become slaves of God; you have eternal life (Slaves of God, Eternal life)

Battle Slave: If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (Free indeed)

Namaan's slave: *(With great happiness and a smile. If she is light enough she can deliver the lines being held by Jesus)* Though I am free; I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. (I'm free)

Centurion's servant: The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Ransom for many)

Pig Feeder: God sent his Son, to redeem us, So we are no longer slaves but sons of the Father! (Redeemed, no longer slaves)

(1 and 2 perform the actions of slave and auctioneer as Leader speaks. Jesus removes the chains)

Leader: They tell of a time when the piercing protests and piteous cries from a slave woman being dragged to the auctioneer's block attracted the attention of young Abraham Lincoln. He was so moved with compassion that he bought her. When he removed the chains from her, he told her she was free. *(To 1, kindly and gently)* You are free. You can go wherever you like.

1: *(Can't believe it, but keeps her eyes on Jesus as if the words have come from his lips instead of the Leader's)* I can go wherever I want?

Leader: Yes, You're free. You can go wherever you like.

1: Then I'm going with you. *(Jesus, 1,2,3,4 move stage right. All characters then arrange themselves around Jesus who stays at center stage. Some may kneel; all have their eyes fixed on Him)*

Leader: *(The only time the Leader or any Chorus member shows emotion in their voice is now. With great joy...)* We are free. We can go wherever we like. *(Pause)* I choose to go with Jesus. *(Moves to join the others gathered around Jesus)*

ALL: *(Turning to speak to the audience)* Choose this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. *(All kneel before Jesus. Jesus hold out his hands to the audience)*

Jesus: Come!

(Curtain)

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