

Exodus reader's theater (short)

CHARACTERS: Voice of God (19), Moses (25), Pharaoh (8), Jochebed (3), Advisor 1 (1), Advisor 2 (2), Miriam (15), Pharaoh's Daughter (4), Israelite Forman 2 (1), Egyptian overseer (1), Hebrew 1 (1), Hebrew 2 (1), Aaron (7), Narrator (9), Zipporah (1)

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes/page

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Exodus, Hebrews 11:23, Psalm 105, 106

Israel Oppressed in Egypt (chapter 1)

PHARAOH: (*to advisors*) Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and powerful than we are.

ADVISOR 2: If war breaks out, they may join our enemies, fight against us, and leave the country.

ADVISOR 1: They wouldn't do that. They are Joseph's relatives.

PHARAOH: I don't know this Joseph. Assign taskmasters over the Israelites to oppress them with forced labor.

ADVISOR 2: Great idea. They can build Pithom and Rameses as supply cities.

PHARAOH: Command the Israelite scum to throw every son born to the Hebrews into the Nile, but let every daughter live.

NARRATOR: But a Levite woman ignored Pharaoh's commands

JOCHEBED: I have given birth to a beautiful son. I cannot kill him. I will hide him.

MIRIAM: Don't you fear the king's edict?

JOCHEBED: No, he is no ordinary child, and I am not afraid.

NARRATOR: Three months passed.

MIRIAM: We can no longer hide baby, mother. What will we do?

JOCHEBED: Get me a papyrus basket. I will coat it with asphalt and pitch, then place the child in it. When I set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile, Miriam, you must stand at a distance in order to see what happens to him.

NARRATOR: Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe at the Nile while her servant girls walked along the riverbank.

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER: Servant, fetch that basket among the reeds. (*SERVANT hands her basket which she opens*) This is one of the Hebrew boys. (*compassionately*) I feel sorry for him.

MIRIAM: Should I go and call a woman from the Hebrews to nurse the boy for you?

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER: Go.

MIRIAM: Mama, Pharaoh's daughter is adopting my brother! She wants to see you.

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER: Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will pay your wages.

NARRATOR: So Jochebed took the boy and nursed him. When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter.

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER: I name this child Moses because I drew him out of the water. He is now my son.

Moses in Midian

NARRATOR: Years later, after Moses had grown up, he observed the Hebrews forced labor.

HEBREW 1: Ow! Ow!

MOSES: You! Egyptian! Stop beating that Hebrew.

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NARRATOR: Looking all around and seeing no one, he struck the Egyptian dead and hid him in the sand.

MIRIAM: The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting.

MOSES: Why are you attacking your neighbor?

HEBREW 2: Who made you a leader and judge over us? Are you planning to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?

MOSES: (*aside to audience*) What I did is certainly known.

PHARAOH: Find Moses and kill him!

NARRATOR: Moses fled from Pharaoh to Midian, married Zipporah and had a son.

MOSES: I name you Gershom, for I have been a foreigner in a foreign land.

Deliverance begins (chapters 2 & 3)

NARRATOR: After a long time, the king of Egypt died.

MIRIAM: We Israelites groaned because of our difficult labor.

AARON: We cried out to God and He heard us.

ZIPPORAH: Meanwhile, Moses led the flock to Horeb, the mountain of God.

MOSES: (*aside to audience*) Look, a bush that burns but is not consumed by the flames. I must investigate.

VOICE OF GOD: Moses, Moses!

MOSES: Here I am!

VOICE OF GOD: Do not come closer. Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.

MOSES: Yes, Lord.

VOICE OF GOD: I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

MOSES: (*aside to audience as he covers his face*) I am afraid to look at God.

VOICE OF GOD: I have observed the misery of My people in Egypt, and I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.

MOSES: Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?

VOICE OF GOD: I will certainly be with you.

MOSES: What if the Israelites ask me your name?

VOICE OF GOD: Tell them I AM has sent you.

MOSES: What if they won't believe me and will not obey me but say, 'The Lord did not appear to you'?

VOICE OF GOD: What is that in your hand?

MOSES: A staff.

VOICE OF GOD: Throw it on the ground.

MOSES: (*startled and running from it*) It's a snake!

VOICE OF GOD: Stretch out your hand and grab it by the tail.

NARRATOR: Moses stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand.

VOICE OF GOD: Put your hand inside your cloak.

MOSES: (*puts hand in and pulls it out*) My hand is diseased, white as snow.

VOICE OF GOD: Put your hand back inside your cloak.

MOSES: (*putting hand in and taking it out*) Now it is like the rest of my skin.

VOICE OF GOD: If they will not believe you and will not respond to the evidence of the first sign, they may believe the evidence of the second sign.

MOSES: What if they don't believe either sign?

VOICE OF GOD: Take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the Nile will become blood when it hits the ground.

MOSES: Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent—either in the past or recently.

VOICE OF GOD: Who made the human mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, Yahweh? Now go! I will help you speak and I will teach you what to say.

MOSES: (*begging*) Please, Lord, send someone else.

VOICE OF GOD: Your brother Aaron can do the talking. Now take your staff and go meet him.

Moses Confronts Pharaoh (chapter 5)

MIRIAM: Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh.

AARON: (*to Pharaoh*) This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: Let My people go.

PHARAOH: Who is Yahweh that I should obey Him. I will not let Israel go. In fact, I'll make their work harder by not giving them straw to make bricks.

EGYPTIAN OVERSEER: Should we reduce the quota of bricks each one is required to make?

PHARAOH: No, impose heavier work on those Hebrew slackers.

Miriam: The Israelite foremen were beaten.

ISRAELITE FOREMAN: (*to Pharaoh*) Why are you treating your servants this way?

ISRAELITE FOREMAN 2: No straw has been given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!'

ISRAELITE FOREMAN: Look, your servants are being beaten, but it is your own people who are at fault.

PHARAOH: (*snarling*) You are slackers. Slackers! That is why you are saying, 'Let us go sacrifice to the Lord.' Now get to work. No straw will be given to you, but you must produce the same quantity of bricks.

ISRAELITE FOREMAN 2: We are in big trouble.

MOSES: (*humbly with grief*) Lord, ever since I went in to Pharaoh to speak in Your name he has caused trouble for this people.

VOICE OF GOD: Now you are going to see what I will do to Pharaoh: he will let them go.

The Ten Plagues (chapters 6-7)

VOICE OF GOD: Moses, you and Aaron tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go from his land.

MIRIAM: Moses was 80 years old and Aaron 83 when they spoke to Pharaoh.

VOICE OF GOD: When Pharaoh tells you, 'Perform a miracle,' Aaron will throw his staff down before Pharaoh. It will become a serpent.

MIRIAM: So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and did just as the Lord had commanded.

MOSES: Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent.

MIRIAM: However, Pharaoh's heart hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

VOICE OF GOD: Meet Pharaoh by the bank of the Nile. Tell him to let my people go.

MOSES: (*to PHARAOH*) Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you: Let My people go.

AARON: Here is how you will know that it is Yahweh. The water in the Nile will turn to blood.

MIRIAM: All the water in the Nile was turned to blood, the fish died and the Egyptians could not drink water from it.

MOSES: Pharaoh's heart stayed hard.

AARON: It stayed hard through the plague of frogs.

MOSES: And gnats.

MIRIAM: Swarms of Flies came next but these did not plague the Hebrews.

AARON: Then the Lord brought a severe plague against the Egyptians livestock

MIRIAM: The 6th plague was boils.

AARON: Next lightning struck the earth, and the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt.

MOSES: Locusts came and ate every plant in the land.

MIRIAM: But Pharaoh's heart stayed hard

AARON: Darkness covered the land during the 9th plague

MOSES: Last and most terrible, the first born died when the angel of death passed by.

Psalm 105

MIRIAM: Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name;

ALL: make known among the nations what he has done.

MMM: Sing to him, sing praise to him;

ALL: tell of all his wonderful acts.

MIRIAM: He is the Lord our God;

ALL: He the covenant he made with Abraham,

MMM: the oath he swore to Isaac.

MIRIAM: He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree,

ALL: to Israel as an everlasting covenant:

VOG: To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.

MIRIAM: The Lord made his people very fruitful;

ALL: He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen.

MIRIAM: They performed his signs among them,

ALL: He sent darkness and made the land dark—

MMM: for had they not rebelled against his words?

MIRIAM: He turned their waters into blood, causing their fish to die.

ALL: Their land teemed with frogs, which went up into the bedrooms of their rulers.

MIRIAM: He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country.

ALL: He turned their rain into hail, with lightning throughout their land;

MIRIAM: he struck down their vines and fig trees and shattered the trees of their country.

ALL: He spoke, and the locusts came, grasshoppers without number;

MMM: they ate up every green thing in their land, ate up the produce of their soil.

ALL: (*hushed tones*) Then he struck down all the firstborn in their land, the first fruits of all their manhood.

MIRIAM: He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold,

ALL: and from among their tribes no one faltered.

MMM: Egypt was glad when they left, because dread of Israel had fallen on them.

MIRIAM: He spread out a cloud as a covering, and a fire to give light at night.

ALL: They asked, and he brought them quail; he fed them well with the bread of heaven.

MIRIAM: He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed like a river in the desert.

ALL: For he remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham.

MIRIAM: He brought out his people with rejoicing,

ALL: his chosen ones with shouts of joy;

MIRIAM: he gave them the lands of the nations, and they fell heir to what others had toiled for—

MMM: that they might keep his precepts and observe his laws.

ALL: (*shouting*) Praise the Lord.

Psalm 106

LEADER: Praise the Lord.

ALL: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

LEADER: his love endures forever.

ALL: Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord or fully declare his praise?

LEADER: God rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up;

ALL: he led them through the depths as through a desert.

GROUP A: He saved them from the hand of the foe;

GROUP B: from the hand of the enemy he redeemed them.

ALL: The waters covered their adversaries; not one of them survived.

LEADER: Then they believed his promises and sang his praise.

ALL: But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his plan to unfold.

LEADER: In the desert they gave in to their craving;

ALL: in the wilderness they put God to the test.

LEADER: So he gave them what they asked for,

ALL: but sent a wasting disease among them.

LEADER: In the camp they grew envious of Moses and of Aaron, who was consecrated to the Lord.

ALL: The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan; it buried the company of Abiram.

GROUP A: Fire blazed among their followers;

GROUP B: a flame consumed the wicked.

LEADER: At Horeb they made a calf and worshiped an idol cast from metal.

ALL: (*disgusted*) They exchanged their glorious God for an image of a bull, which eats grass.

LEADER: They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt,

GROUP A: miracles in the land of Ham

GROUP B: and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.

LEADER: So God said he would destroy them— had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him

ALL: to keep his wrath from destroying them.

GROUP A: Then they despised the pleasant land;

GROUP B: they did not believe his promise.

ALL: They grumbled in their tents and did not obey the Lord.

LEADER: So he swore to them with uplifted hand that he would make them fall in the wilderness,

GROUP A: make their descendants fall among the nations

GROUP B: and scatter them throughout the lands.

LEADER: (*disgusted*) They yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods;

ALL: they aroused the Lord's anger by their wicked deeds, and a plague broke out among them.

LEADER: But Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was checked.

ALL: This was credited to him as righteousness for endless generations to come.

LEADER: By the waters of Meribah they angered the Lord,

GROUP A: and trouble came to Moses because of them;

GROUP B: for they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses' lips.

LEADER: They did not destroy the peoples as the Lord had commanded them,

ALL: but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs.

GROUP A: They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them.

GROUP B: They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to false gods.

LEADER: (*sorrowful*) They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters,

ALL: whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,

LEADER: and the land was desecrated by their blood.

ALL: Therefore, the Lord was angry with his people and abhorred his inheritance.

LEADER: He gave them into the hands of the nations, and their foes ruled over them.

ALL: Their enemies oppressed them and subjected them to their power.

LEADER: Many times he delivered them,

ALL: but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin.

LEADER: Yet he took note of their distress when he heard their cry;

ALL: for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.

LEADER: He caused all who held them captive to show them mercy.

ALL: Save us, Lord our God, and gather us from the nations,

LEADER: that we may give thanks to your holy name

ALL: and glory in your praise.

LEADER: Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,

ALL: from everlasting to everlasting.

LEADER: Let all the people say,

ALL: Amen! Praise the Lord.