

Stories of the Hebrew Bible

Lesson 6: Moses Part 1 – From the Bulrushes to the Burning Bush

3.12.2017

Objectives: Explore life of Moses as seminal figure in Judaism, beginning with his childhood and call to free Israelites from slavery.

Materials: flipchart, blank cards in basket, Moses video, lesson attachments.

Time allotments suggested and meant to be adapted for **75 minute class**.

1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
 - ▶ What places are deeply sacred and “speak” to you?
 - ▶ Have you ever felt a strong call to do something or be someone? What or Who?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

2. Silly Fun: Guess Who? (5 minutes max)

Give each youth 3 blank cards to write 3 little known facts about themselves (teachers included, too!) For example: I once fell asleep while eating lunch, I was born exactly at midnight, my favorite superhero is Wolverine. Teacher collects and mixes cards in a basket, then draws one card at a time and reads aloud for youth to guess who’s fact it is. (Please don’t guess aloud if it’s your own card!) See who can guess the most correctly.

3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: “We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”

Teacher reads: (from Rabbi Lawrence Kushner)

“The burning bush was not a miracle. It was a test. God wanted to find out whether or not Moses could pay attention to something for more than a few minutes. When Moses did, God spoke. The trick is to pay attention to what is going on around you long enough to behold the miracle without falling asleep. There is another world, right here within this one, whenever we pay attention.”

4. **Joys and Sorrows** (10 minutes): Listening is a precious gift that we offer one another at church. Using the balance scale and the blue (sorrows) and yellow (joys) stones, invite youth to share a joy and/or a sorrow from the past week, as a way of *meeting* one another with our lives and *sharing* in community. You will want to set limits (e.g. two stones max per person) so that no one monopolizes sharing time.

Each Sunday, a copy of the congregation's Embracing Meditation will be made available to your class, so that stones can be put in for those whose names are being spoken in the Sanctuary.

5. **Introduction to Moses** (15 minutes)

Teacher summarizes: Moses is a central figure in the Hebrew Bible and arguably the most important prophet in Judaism, not to mention his importance for Christianity and Islam! Many of the sacred events commemorated in modern Judaism originate in the story of Moses (e.g. the Passover Seder meal being one of the most familiar in our culture). We will have opportunity to see his life story told from birth to death in the video. But first...

What do we already know about Moses?

- On a flipchart, brainstorm with youth and list what they feel they already know about the story of Moses (e.g. Ten Commandments, freedom from Egypt, 10 Plagues, Burning Bush)
- Divide youth into six small groups. Pass out the attachment cards – one card per group – each describing a period from the “Timeline of Moses’ Life.” Have one youth from each group read aloud their card. Go in sequence, with teachers facilitating discussion as needed so youth have a broad sense of Moses’ life story:
 - The Early Years
 - Moses as God’s Liberator
 - Moses and the Exodus
 - The Ten Commandments
 - Desert Wandering
 - Battles and Final Years

6. **Viewing Video** (approx 35 minutes)

Play video from beginning to end of the burning bush scene. The Moses video has some tough parts but is appropriate for this age group. There may be questions, implied themes and teachers may want to pause viewing to discuss as needed.

7. **Questions for Discussion** (10 minutes)

- In what ways is Moses of two worlds – both Egyptian and Hebrew, a prince and slave, of two mothers, one who tries to save but also ends up murdering – and divided between different identities and loyalties?
- Does he *belong* to both worlds or is he *marginalized* from both? (*Consider: Moses has had to struggle just to survive since childhood, and then has to flee Egypt.*)
- How might being marginalized or excluded shape someone’s perspective on life? Do those marginalized “see” something that privileged often cannot see? (*Hint: prophets and those who speak truth to power often come from margins of society.*)
- Through a burning bush, God chooses Moses as the one who will free the Hebrews from Egypt. Why does God choose Moses, someone who is “clumsy with words” and whom the Hebrews may not easily believe? (*Hint: remember that so much of the Hebrew Bible is about becoming a people of faith, who keep trust and covenant with God and one another.*)
- Are there “burning bush” moments occurring today that consume our attention, when ordinary people feel “called” to proclaim truth and freedom from what enslaves us still?
 - Could **Black Lives Matter** be a “burning bush” moment for the country, calling us to freedom from racism?
 - How might the question of immigration be a “burning bush” issue consuming our national political attention?

8. **Say goodbye until next time:** Extinguish the chalice, saying together:

“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”

9. **Help clean up classroom** before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- return blue/yellow stones to containers
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets