

Stories of the Hebrew Bible

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

3.14.2021

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

Materials: Teachers should download lesson plan and attachments onto their desktop.

Time allotment: Suggested for 60 minute online class.

1. Zoom Welcome (as youth arrive into the breakout classroom)

- Teachers and youth are expected to log on to zoom at 11:15am (15 min before class begins at 11:30am) so that everyone can be organized into correct breakout classrooms. We want to make sure there is an attentive adult in each breakout classroom with youth.
- Greet youth and ask everyone to correct their display name as needed. Ask everyone to select “gallery view” to see everyone else.
- Staff will take attendance.
- Opening activity instead of zoom icebreaker today

2. Opening activity (5 minutes, begin while waiting for everyone to arrive)

We are learning about Moses today! Over the next three weeks, we will watch Moses’ life story told from birth to death. *What do we already know about Moses?*

- Invite youth to write in the chat or share aloud what they already know about the story of Moses (e.g. Ten Commandments, freedom from Egypt, 10 Plagues, Burning Bush).
- Read responses aloud and facilitate conversation.

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. Brief Check-in (5 minutes)

Continue weekly ritual/check-in (e.g. sharing a joy or sorrow so that everyone feels present in class).

5. Introduction to Moses (5 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). Over the next three weeks, we will have opportunity to watch his life story told from birth to death.

Screen share lesson attachment 6a (Moses Timeline)

- Ask for volunteers to read “The Early Years” and “Moses as God’s Liberator” aloud.
- Take a moment to look at the images from early history.

6. Viewing Video (approx 35 minutes)

Screen share (with audio) the “Moses” DVD.

- Play video from beginning to the 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 and white supremacy?
 - Could **#MeToo** be a “burning bush” moment for the country, calling us to freedom from misogyny—the hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women or girls—and rape culture?
 - What other “burning bush” moments and issues can you think of? (e.g. climate crisis, immigration, Water Is Life, COVID-19 pandemic)

8. **Extinguish the chalice**, saying together: *“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”*

9. **Leave zoom breakout classroom:** wait until all youth have left, click “Leave” then “Leave Meeting.”