

THE STORY OF PASSOVER:

“You Want Me to Do What?”

Walk in the Sandals of our Ancestors
Through
An Exuberant Interactive Contemporary
Story of Passover
For Jewish and Interfaith Families

A Complement to Your Favorite Haggadah

"You Want Me To Do What" is the most innovative addition to the Passover literature I've seen. This is not just another pretty Haggadah....these interactive mini-dramas will make ANY Seder using any Haggadah come alive for all ages." Cantor Charles Bergman, Los Angeles, CA

by

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Forward

When I was young, my father presided over our family's Seder with both religious passion and a sense of what pages to read and which to skip. He didn't have to explain the importance of Passover because my siblings and I had listened to the story since we were old enough to sit at the table. As we grew older, the story of Passover was told and retold at Sunday school and Hebrew school.

Passover's story of hardship and freedom was a part of me that I took for granted, until I had grandchildren.

Like in many families today, my grandchildren come from mixed religious backgrounds and have had no formal religious training. While their genius is evident in other aspects of their lives, remembering, much less relating to, the Passover story appeared to be one of their blind spots.

For me, their blank faces and lack of willing participation took something away from the joy of the Seder. So, I began to think about ways to engage their interest while also including our non-Jewish family members.

The Story of Passover as told herein is the result of two years of work. The first year I developed the story and the presentation, making it more accessible. I numbered the paragraphs, cut them up, folded them and dropped them in a basket. At the Seder, I passed the basket around the table so each person could pick one. It went around several times until it was empty. Starting with "1," people read their paragraph(s) sequentially. It was fun for both young and old to see who read next and if they were paying attention.

Good, I thought, but maybe it could be better. It was then that I came up with the idea of scripted conversations so my grandchildren not only heard the Story of Passover but experienced it *as if they were there*. It was my intention to bring out the underlying message in a modern presentation with a blend of truth, humor and humanity.

The story and scripts may be used together or separately, as a whole or in part. The choice is yours.

It is my hope that you will find "*You Want Me To Do What?*" to be an enhancement to your Seder and a wonderful, joyous bonding experience for your family.

Carol Bluestein, 2012

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THE STORY OF PASSOVER:

“You Want Me To Do What?”

We are not going to take it anymore—“*Let My People Go.*”

We give no one the power to crush our spirit.

We will find a path to freedom and pay the price to make it so.

Introduction

The Passover Story is both old and new at the same time. The problems our ancestors faced long ago are being faced by societies throughout the world today—including ours. The action of breaking ties of bondage and emerging free is about spiritual as well as physical freedom.

As we celebrate Passover with the retelling of the Passover Story, think about the challenges you've faced and overcome, or still have to meet. Think about the people throughout the world who face obstacles every day under the threat of imprisonment or death as they pursue the freedom of speech, worship, education, work, food and shelter, personal safety and movement.

The Passover Story is old, but the struggle for freedom and human rights is ever present.

1. Jacob's Story

This Passover story begins in Canaan, somewhere near present day Israel, with Jacob and his family of two wives, a couple of women friends, one daughter, Dinah, and twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin. One day during the family's travels, Jacob sent everyone ahead while he finished cleaning up around the campsite. It took him all day.

At dusk, Jacob was approached by a Stranger. They argued and fought through the night. In the morning, the Stranger ended the fight, and shared unexpected news.

In honor of Jacob's courage, the Stranger, who was really an Angel of God, blessed Jacob with the name Israel and told him that each of his twelve sons would head a tribe of Israelites.

Jacob and the Stranger

1-1 Stranger, 1-2 Jacob

- 1: "What are you doing, old man?"**
- 2: "My name is Jacob and I'm cleaning up my family's campsite, leaving it as we found it. And, just so you know, I am the father of twelve sons. "
- 1: "Picking up rags... Planting trees... Raking sand... Tending the fire... You are doing woman's work."**
- 2: "The rags will be recycled into rugs. The trees will replace those cut for firewood. The animal dung will feed our fires when the wood is gone. It must all be done before I can join my family."
- 1: "Jacob, step aside so I can pass."**
- 2: "*YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?*"
- 1: "Let me pass."**
- 2: "It would go faster, Stranger, if you would help."
- 1: "I do not do the work of women and children."**
- 2: "Then, you must wait."
- 1: "Your family can wait. If you refuse to step aside – we wrestle."**
- 2: "You are a bully. I will wrestle – for my honor, rights, my family and my life."
- 1: "We have been wrestling all night old man. Time to give up!"**
- 2: "Never."
- 1: "Then I must stop the fight and reveal myself... as an Angel of God."**
- 2: "I am speechless... and very, very tired."
- 1: "In honor of your bravery, I bless you with the name of Israel. Your sons will head the twelve tribes of Israel and your descendants will be known as Israelites."**

2. Joseph as a Boy

Of all his children, Jacob loved his eleventh son, Joseph, the most. He spoiled the boy rotten in front of all the other brothers – Joseph sat next to Jacob at the head of the table, got the best chair, the easiest jobs, the best clothes and permission to stay up later than all the other brothers.

As a result, Joseph grew into a demanding, obnoxious teenager whom the brothers hated. When a caravan of traders came to town, the jealous brothers devised a plan to get rid of Joseph by *selling him to the traders*. After they did this, they made up a lie to tell their father. They said that Joseph had been killed by wild animals and as proof showed their father Joseph's blood soaked coat of many colors.

Joseph and his Brothers

2-1 Simeon, 2-2 Ruben, 2-3 Joseph

1: "Ruben, did you see Joseph today?"

2: "Who could miss him? That coat of many colors should have been mine."

1: "All we get to wear is brown: *ecru, beige, wheat, mustard, chocolate and coffee*. It's not fair, Simeon. I need color in my life, too!"

2: "Shush. Joseph is coming."

3: "Ruben, Simeon. Why are you standing around? Shouldn't you be working?"

1: "Joseph, go herd the sheep, clean the hen house or clean out the barn.

3: "*YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?* Forget it. I can't get my beautiful coat dirty. Besides, I had another dream."

2: "Give us a break. The dream of 11 wheat bundles bowing to you was boring."

3: "*This dream was about the moon and eleven stars. Clearly, I'm a V.I.P.*"

2: "Get out of here before I beat you up!"

1: "Reuben, look at Joseph run. I think you scared him."

2: "Simeon, I have an idea of how to get rid of that pain in the tush for good."

1: "Tell me."

2: "How about we sell him to the slave traders. Their caravan's in town."

1: "Get rid of Joseph *and* make some money. Sounds a like a plan."

2: "Oops. What will we tell Papa? "

1: "I know. We'll tell him Joseph was eaten by wild animals."

2: "Yeah. And we'll take his coat and dip it in goat's blood as proof."

1: "Exactly."

2: "Let's do it tonight."

3. Joseph Gets a Bad Break

The caravan traders purchased Joseph and left the next morning. When they reached Egypt, the traders sold Joseph to Pharaoh's male Secretary, Potiphar (Po-ti-far). Over time, Joseph did such a good job that he became head of the household staff.

One day, Potiphar's wife snuck up on Joseph and kissed him. Joseph told Potiphar's wife never to do that again. Embarrassed and angry, Potiphar's wife lied to her husband and said that *Joseph had kissed her*. Before Joseph could explain, an angry Potiphar threw Joseph into prison.

While he was there, Joseph listened to the dreams of the prisoners and told them what their dreams meant. Soon the guards asked him to interpret *their* dreams. After some time, the palace staff began to sneak down to the prison so Joseph could explain *their* dreams.

4. Joseph Helps Pharaoh

While Joseph was in prison, Pharaoh began to have terrible dreams. He heard about Joseph and brought him to the court. Pharaoh told him his dreams and asked Joseph what they meant. Joseph told Pharaoh that Egypt would have seven good years of harvest, followed by seven bad years of famine, so Pharaoh had better prepare.

Pharaoh was so delighted that he made Joseph the Viceroy of Egypt and put him in charge of making sure there would be enough food in Egypt during the famine.

Pharaoh's Dream

4-1 Nahab, the Advisor, 4-2 Pharaoh, 4-3 Joseph

- 1: **"My Pharaoh, you are not looking well."**
- 2: "I haven't slept for weeks, Nahab. My dreams are driving me crazy."
- 1: **"Have you asked the court physician for medication, the magician for spells, the high priest for forgiveness or the judge for pardons?"**
- 2: "Yes, yes, yes and no. I am Pharaoh. No pardons. I can do no wrong."
- 1: **"Your prisons are filthy, your laws are unjust, you allow your soldiers do whatever they want and you deny your people universal health care."**
- 2: "What's your point? Never mind. Cure my dreams by tonight or die at dawn."
- 1: **"Here is the prisoner Joseph. He explains dreams. Tell him yours."**
- 2: "I dreamt of seven beautiful healthy cows eaten by seven ugly sick cows and the sick cows remained ugly and sick. Then I dreamt of seven healthy stalks of grain gobbled up by seven dried up stalks and the dried up stalks remained dried up. What does these mean? I'm worried half to death."
- 3: "Pharaoh, your dreams say Egypt will have seven years of lots of good food followed by seven years of no food—hunger and famine. Unless you take action, your people will die."
- 2: "Brilliant, Joseph! I appoint you Viceroy of Egypt. Make sure enough food is grown and stored during the good years so our people will have plenty to eat during the years of famine."
- 3: "Thank you. I'm honored to serve.... Does that mean you'll give me a corner office? With a carpet and windows? And an administrative assistant?"
- 2: *"YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?"*
- 3: "I'm good... A desk. A chair. A stone and a chisel. Although it might take a while."
- 2: "I'll do it. The problem is urgent. You start right now."

5. Jacob's Family Reunites with Joseph

Pharaoh kept his promise and Joseph, Viceroy of Egypt, did his job well. When the famine hit, Egypt had food but Canaan – where Joseph's family still lived – didn't. To keep from starving, Joseph's father, Jacob, decided his whole family had to leave and go to Egypt.

The Israelites packed up all their belongings and prepared their flocks of sheep, goats, oxen and camels. The family traveled for many days. After they arrived in Egypt, Jacob discovered to his joy and amazement that the *Viceroy was his son, Joseph*. He and his sons went to see Joseph so the brothers could apologize for what they had done. Joseph forgave them and the family was reunited.

Thanks to Joseph's planning, the Israelites prospered. The brothers had families. Their children married and had families. Over the next four hundred years, the Israelites had a wonderful life and the number of families grew and grew.

6. 400 Years Later

Four hundred years is a long time. So long, in fact, that the Pharaoh who now ruled Egypt did not know the story of Joseph or his deeds. He only saw the large and growing community of Israelites. The Pharaoh was weak and afraid the Israelites would take over everything—jobs, government, entertainment, information technology—and even his job as Pharaoh.

This fear made the Pharaoh a bully and a bigot—angry, hateful and just plain crazy mean. He announced the Israelites would have to carry identification cards, pay extra taxes, join the army's work details and help build cities and roads. Despite these restrictions and the hard labor, the Israelites continued to thrive. Pharaoh was furious. He called in his advisors to figure out a new plan of action.

The Israelite Problem

6-1 Ameni, a Kind Advisor, 6-2 Pharaoh, 6-3 Kasmut, a Mean Advisor

- 1: "My Pharaoh. What's bothering you today?"
- 2: **"Ameni, I look out over Egypt and what do I see?"**
- 1: "Sand, palm trees, the Nile, crocodiles sunning on the shore."
- 2: **"No. I see more Israelites than Egyptians."**
- 1: "They are good workers and have lived in Egypt over 400 years. They have stalls in the bazaar, publish the news papyrus, run your palace and your bank, design your clothes and plan your parades. In fact, you hired them."
- 2: **"I am Pharaoh. I can un-hire them. They're taking Egyptian jobs and soon they'll taker mine!"**
- 1: "Sire, that kind of talk is mean, hateful, bigoted and untrue. Your job is safe. You rule by the will of the gods."
- 2: **"The gods can change their minds. I'm a wreck. I can't sleep, work or play. Look, my hands are shaking."**
- 3: "I know. How about if you kill everyone who is *not Egyptian*?"
- 2: **"YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?"**
- 1: "Don't be ridiculous, Kasmut. That's genocide. Never a good solution."
- 2: **"And, it takes too long. There has to be another way."**
- 3: "How about this. Make the Israelites work for nothing, as a sign of their loyalty. It will save you lots of money."
- 2: **"Ah ha. Great idea, Kasmut. I'll be richer than ever before. Make it so!"**
- 1: "But Pharaoh, that's slavery."
- 2: **"You call it slavery. I call it Management by Objective."**
- 1: "Slavery is never a good thing, my Pharaoh."
- 2: **"That, Ameni, depends entirely on one's perspective."**

7. The Israelites in Egypt

Even though life was difficult, the Israelites never lost their spirit. They worked hard. At the end of each day they came home to their families and communities for support and comfort. They learned to live with the soldiers marching through their villages, checking identification cards and making sure everyone was obeying the new laws.

The Israelites continued to thrive even though life was difficult and the soldiers were mean. Pharaoh's plan had failed. He was even angrier and meaner than before. He decided to crush the Israelites' spirits by killing all the boy babies born in Israelite families.

8. A Baby is Born

At the home of Jochebed (Jo-ca-bed) and Amram, a baby was about to be born. The family was both excited and fearful. Pharaoh's soldiers listened for the cry of every newborn and barged in to investigate. Amram knew if it was a boy, the family would have to figure out a way to keep him safe so Pharaoh's soldiers could not kill him.

The Baby Must Be Saved

8-1 Papa Amram, 8-2 Sister Miriam

1: "What's going on, Miriam?"

2: "Mama's just given birth to a baby boy."

1: "This is not good. Pharaoh's killing all the newborn male children. Figure out a way to save the boy."

2: "Papa, *YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?*"

1: "Make a plan. Save the baby."

2: "I know. Let's put him in a basket and float him down the Nile."

1: "Miriam, you would put the baby in a basket and send him down the river without a paddle? If he survives, then what?"

2: "Someone will find him and take care of him."

1: "And have one more mouth to feed? Not happening."

2: "Well, Pharaoh's daughter goes to the river every day."

1: "So do thousands of Egyptians."

2: "But in this case, I'll make the basket float to her."

1: "You have worked this out? It's a big river full of Nile crocodiles."

2: "I'll calculate the river's speed, current force, wind velocity, surface tension, buoyancy and mass. I know it will work, Papa."

1: "And, if it fails?"

2: "My back-up plan is to hide in the rushes. When the princess comes to bathe, I'll push the baby in his basket toward her. How does that sound?"

1: "It doesn't matter. We have to try. We have no choice."

2: "It will work, Papa, I promise."

1: "If it does, it will be a miracle."

9. The Baby in a Basket

Miriam made several baskets from bulrush leaves and tested the path of the basket using a rock in place of the baby. Despite the correctness of her theory, the basket never went to the same place twice. Miriam had to use her back-up plan.

She put the baby in the basket and went in the water near where the Princess bathed. She hid in the leaves of the bulrushes and cat-o-nine tails until the Princess arrived with her ladies-in-waiting. As they bathed, Miriam got down low in the water and quietly pushed the basket toward the Princess and watched to see what would happen.

The Princess Finds a Baby

9-1 Princess, 9-2 Layla, a Lady in Waiting, 9-3 Hasina, a Lady in Waiting

1: "What's that noise?"

2: "What noise, Princess?"

1: "There it is again."

2: "It's a baby."

1: "Fetch it here, Layla."

2: "It's too far out. I can't swim."

1: "Someone get me that baby NOW!"

3: "I'll go. I've taken swimming lessons."

1: "Good, Hasina. Be fast....Careful.... Careful.... Bring the basket to me."

3: "Here's it is my Princess."

1: "The baby is so cute. Wait. Here's a note. Read it."

3: "I can't read."

2: "I'll read it. I've taken reading lessons."

1: "So tell me, Layla, what does it say?"

2: "Please take care of me."

1: "This baby WANTS ME TO DO WHAT?"

3: "You can do it, Princess. You're smart and you can learn."

1: "You're right. I can do whatever I set my mind to do."

2: "Wait! It's a boy. Pharaoh will say no and have him killed."

1: "Daddy would never say no to me."

3: "Pharaoh is one tough cookie."

1: "Well, this apple doesn't fall far from the tree. The baby will be mine."

2: "As you wish, so shall it be."

10. The Princess Loves the Baby

The Princess brought the baby back to the palace. She bathed and dressed him in a 500 count organic Egyptian cotton *onesie*. Then she fed him and played with him for the rest of the morning.

This child was better than any of her toys, clothes or pets. She loved the baby and was determined to keep him. But first, she had to ask Pharaoh for permission and she knew her father *did not like surprises*.

Pharaoh and the Princess

10-1 Pharaoh, 10-2 Princess

1: "What's that?"

2: "It's a really cute baby, Daddy. I want you to let me keep him."

1: "YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?"

2: "Let me keep the baby. I found him and he's mine."

1: "No. Babies cry, make messes and want to be held all the time."

2: "I've named him Moses – *'taken from the river.'*"

1: "Moses will grow up and make lots of trouble. He won't be so cute then."

2: "But Daddy, everyone has a baby except me."

1: "You don't need a baby. You're too young. Take up golf."

2: "This baby needs to be taken care of. Let me have him or I'll never talk to you again."

1: "Now there's an interesting possibility."

2: "Pulleeeeeze. I'll take care of him, I promise."

1: "This will be just like the dog I gave you. Two days later it was mine."

2: "Well, I'm older now. I'll get a nanny."

1: "Good management solution. You may be ready for Queen someday."

2: "Then it's okay?"

1: "Yes but I don't want to see or hear this Moses. Promise?"

2: "I promise. You won't regret it."

1: "I already do."

11. Pharaoh Tests Moses

Once Pharaoh said yes, he had second thoughts. "What if the baby was an Israelite and wanted his throne." He decided the baby Moses had to pass a test to make sure.

Pharaoh had a bowl of gold and a bowl of hot coals placed in front of the baby and said to the Princess, "Let the baby choose."

As the baby Moses reached for the bowl with the shiny gold, an Angel of God came down and moved his hand into the hot coals. Feeling the heat of the fire, the baby screamed and put his hand in his mouth, burning his lips and tongue.

Pharaoh saw this as a sign that the baby Moses did not want a Pharaoh's power, so he said the baby could stay.

12. Moses and Rameses

Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace and was treated as a Prince of Egypt. His sister Miriam was his nurse. By the time he was seventeen, his best friend was Prince Rameses. They went to school together. They took lessons in Pharaoh Protocol and Dictator Government Essentials. They trained to be soldiers. They were good students and in their spare time, they had fun.

Moses, Rameses and the Slave Master

12-1 Moses, 12-2 Rameses, 12-3 Slave Master

1: "I'm bored, Rameses."

2: "Moses, we just played chess, checkers, ping pong and tennis."

1: "But now, nothing."

2: "How about we see who can slide the farthest on wet marble floors?"

1: "We did that yesterday. I got it. Let's play volleyball."

2: "Good idea, Moses. But, we'll need more players."

1: "Go get ten slaves from the road detail."

2: *"YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?"*

1: "Never mind, Rameses. I'll do it."

2: "That's not a good idea. Moses! Don't! Wait!"

1: "Slave, come play volleyball and bring nine more slaves with you."

3: "Slaves cannot play. Slaves must work."

1: "Quiet soldier. I am Moses, Prince of Egypt. I say they play."

3: "You have no say in this."

1: "I want to play volleyball and I need ten slaves."

3: "Not now. Not today. Not ever."

1: "Slaves, follow me."

3: "No. I shall have to whip them to make sure they keep working."

1: "Don't you dare."

3: "Watch me."

1: "You do it and you're a dead man."

13. Moses in the Desert

Moses knew he had to stop the slave master from hurting the slave. But, he was shocked when he realized he had actually killed him. Afraid for his life, Moses ran away into the desert.

Over time, he settled down, became a sheep herder, married and had a family. One day, as he tended his flock, he noticed a bush on fire – but its branches and leaves did not burn. Curious, he walked over to see the miracle when he heard a mysterious voice. It was the voice of God and it said, “Remove your shoes, this is a holy place.” And Moses did.

Then God told Moses to go to Egypt and free the Israelites from slavery by telling Pharaoh to “*Let My People Go.*”

Moses and the Burning Bush

13-1 God, 13-2 Moses

1: "Moses, the sheep herder? Is that you?"

2: "Who's asking?"

1: "This is God. By the burning bush. I want to talk to you."

2: "I can't see you."

1: "Exactly. I have a job for you."

2: "Me?"

1: "You must go back to Egypt and free your people."

2: "*YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?*"

1: "Don't worry. I'll protect you. This is important."

2: "No. Not me. Not now. No way. I'm 80 years old and wanted for murder."

1: "Your people, the Israelites, need you."

2: "My family needs me."

1: "I need you."

2: "I'll never be able to do it alone—I cannot speak clearly."

1: "Take your brother Aaron and tell Pharaoh to 'Let My People Go.'"

2: "That's crazy. Pharaoh will never believe me or You."

1: "Don't worry. I can be very persuasive."

2: "This is nuts. An impossible task."

1: "Believe."

2: "In a voice from a burning bush?"

1: "Have faith."

14. Moses and Aaron Set off for Egypt

Moses and his brother Aaron, who was 83, packed their things and set off for Egypt and Pharaoh's palace. They rode camels through the desert for two months. God made sure they found water, shade and food. When they arrived at the palace, Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh and delivered God's message: "*Let My People Go.*"

Moses and Pharaoh — Part 1

14-1 Pharaoh, 14-2 Moses

- 1: "Who comes before Pharaoh?"**
- 2: "Moses and my brother Aaron."
- 1: "The same Moses I raised as my son and who murdered my slave master?"**
- 2: "That was a long time ago. He was wrong and I was wrong."
- 1: "Why are you here?"**
- 2: "God has sent me."
- 1: "Which God?"**
- 2: "The one God. He commands, '*Let My People Go.*'"
- 1: "Which people would that be?"**
- 2: "The Israelites, slaves of Egypt."
- 1: "YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?"**
- 2: "Let the Israelites go to a life of freedom."
- 1: "Absolutely not."**
- 2: "Then, for starters, God will send:
- Blood** — to remind you of the wasted lives of our people;
- Frogs** — to fill the rivers and poison the water needed for food;
- Lice** — to infest your crowded ghettos full of poverty, filth and despair;
- Gnats and flies** — to swarm and sting like the slave drivers' whips; and
- Murrain** — to infect the oxen, sheep and cow herds with disease so they will perish. In the end, Egypt will have no slaves – man or beast."
- 1: "No more. I will be ruined. Go. Get out of here and take your people with you."**

15. Pharaoh Changes His Mind

In between each of the plagues Moses explained to Pharaoh, Pharaoh said the Israelites could leave. And each time, Pharaoh changed his mind. Moses brought God's message to him again and again — "*Let My People Go.*" Still Pharaoh continued to promise and then change his mind.

Before Moses went to see Pharaoh for the last time, he told the Israelites to sacrifice sheep and use the blood to mark an X on their doors. Moses wanted to make sure that if the Angel of Death came to kill the first born son, the Angel of Death would *pass over* the Israelite homes and keep their children safe.

Once it was done, he went to see Pharaoh for the last time.

Moses and the Pharaoh—Part 2

15-1 Moses, 15-2 Pharaoh

1: "I'm back. You lied. You broke your promise time after time. You must let the Israelites go."

2: **"No. I need my slaves to build roads, temples and pyramids."**

1: "Let the Israelites go or this time God will send:

Boils—to create wounds of anger long denied, and an ache, like the aching in our souls;

Hail—to fall like our tears, unheeded, frozen by your greed, and the ice will bruise your land;

Locusts—to devour the plants, like hordes of bad thoughts, brought on by exhaustion and lack of trust; and

Darkness—to isolate you and all Egypt from friends and loved ones."

2: **"I don't care. I have an Empire to rule. I am the Divine Pharaoh. I will not give up my slaves."**

1: *"God cares. Let the Israelites go."*

2: **"I say no one leaves."**

1: "Then God will send the *Angel of Death* and your loss will equal our own—the death of every first born son."

2: **"Ha! Then your people will suffer death yet again."**

1: "Not this time. The Angel of Death will *pass over* the homes of my people, the Israelites."

2: **"I don't believe you."**

1: "You'd risk the death of your own son?"

2: **"No one leaves. I have spoken."**

1: "Prepare to mourn your losses."

16. Pharaoh Lets the Israelites Go

That night the *Angel of Death* passed through the land of Egypt. It stopped at all the Egyptian houses and killed the first born son and passed over the Israelite homes.

Crying over the loss of his son, Pharaoh called Moses to the Palace and promised, "Cross my heart and hope to die," to let the Israelites go.

As soon as he heard, Moses sprung into action. He went into the slave quarters and announced that it was time to leave. He asked everyone to grab their hats, get their coats and leave their worries on Egypt's doorstep. And, he said, they shouldn't forget the *matzo* – the bread in the ovens – even though it hadn't had time to rise.

Moses Explains the Exodus

16-1 Doron, an Israelite Slave, 16-2 Moses

1: "YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?"

2: "It's not me, Doron. God wants you and all the Israelites to leave here, give up the life of a slave and go to the Promised Land as a free people."

1: "Moses, Pharaoh will kill us if we walk off the job."

2: "Pharaoh said we can go. He was in tears. His oldest son was visited by the Angel of Death and died last night."

1: "Where is this Promised Land?"

2: "Across the desert."

1: "What about our homes?"

2: "You live inside *four sticks, under a piece of cloth – a hovel!*"

1: "Pharaoh provides three meals a day."

2: "Scraps of bread, thin soup and a bone – *if you are lucky.*"

1: "But Moses, there's no food in the desert."

2: "Bring food, Doron. *How long could it take?*"

1: "Pharaoh provides work so I don't get bored."

2: "Twenty hours of slave labor and no money."

1: "What will I do if I leave?"

2: "You will find happiness in the Promised Land."

1: "What is happiness?"

2: "You will have the freedom to do as you please—when, where and how. *No more slavery — ever.*"

1: "Sounds too good to be true."

2: "Try it. You'll like it."

1: "I hate it already."

17. The Exodus Begins

Leaving Egypt behind, Moses and Aaron led the Israelites on their journey to freedom and the Promised Land. Without a map or compass, they ran into problems right away because they had no idea how to get to where they were going. At first they followed the trail made by the caravans but after a while the trail split and there were no sign posts. Moses and Aaron discussed their options and Moses made a decision.

Going to the Promised Land

17-1 Aaron, 17-2 Moses

1: "Moses, where are we?"

2: "At a crossroads in the desert, Aaron."

1: "Which way?"

2: "A good question."

1: "Just our luck that there's never a caravan when you need one."

2: "We can't wait."

1: "But Moses, what do we do?"

2: "We go left."

1: "*YOU WANT US TO DO WHAT? Just like that? You're going to lead thousands of Israelites on a whim?*"

2: "You prefer right?"

1: "Look, you're the leader—I'm just saying..."

2: "Why? What do you know? What's the difference?"

1: "One way is dry land. The other goes to the Red Sea."

2: "So, which way is dry land?"

1: "How should I know? All the sand dunes look alike."

2: "Then, I repeat, we go left."

1: "Are you sure we shouldn't ask somebody?"

2: "Somebody who? We don't have time."

1: "Why?"

2: "Pharaoh could still change his mind."

1: "Okay, then. Whatever you say."

2: "We go left and I hope to God I'm right."

18. Pharaoh Changes His Mind – Again.

After three days, Pharaoh heard that the Israelites were lost in the desert. “Ridiculous,” he thought. “Those slaves are nothing without me. I want them back.”

Pharaoh mobilized his army. He led the camel riders and horse drawn war-chariots in hot pursuit of the Israelite slaves. From a high desert dune, he saw the Israelites gathering on the banks of the Red Sea with no way to cross. Pharaoh laughed a mean laugh. “Those slaves will be happy to come home with me rather than drown in the Red Sea.” He anticipated that victory would be his and he smiled to himself as he pictured himself leading his slaves back to Egypt while his camel soldiers raced home first to burn the Israelite villages to the ground. Then the slaves would really have nothing.

Pharaoh laughed out loud and said, “By the gods, today was going to be a great day.”

Crossing the Red Sea

18-1 Aaron, 18-2 Moses, 18-3 God

- 1: "Moses, I can see Pharaoh in the distance."**
- 2: "The Red Sea is before us. I must think."
- 1: "Maybe we should have gone right?"**
- 2: "Too late, Aaron. There must be a way."
- 1: "I see no boats or rafts."**
- 2: "We are going to have to swim across."
- 1: "*YOU WANT US TO DO WHAT?*"**
- 2: "You're right. Who knows what's in the water. Oh my God. We've come this far and now we're all going to die."
- 3: "Moses!"**
- 2: "Who's that?"
- 3: "You have a problem? You could ask Me."**
- 2: "Who? What? Wait a minute. Is that you, God?"
- 3: "One little prayer and you could be on dry land."**
- 2: "*Now you tell me!*"
- 3: "You'll learn."**
- 2: "What should I do? Pharaoh's men are coming. Please help us."
- 3: "Is that a prayer?"**
- 2: "Yes. I pray You will help."
- 3: "Touch your staff to the water and the Israelites will cross on dry land."**
- 2: "Thank you, God."
- 3: "Another good prayer. I like it. Do it more often."**

19. The Red Sea Splits

The Israelites watched as Moses touched his staff to the water and the Red Sea split. Between the high walls of water was a path of dry land.

“Don’t just stand there,” Moses said to the awestruck Israelites. “Cross the river bed. Quickly, before Pharaoh gets here.”

With a fierce determination to be free, the Israelites gathered their things and walked across the Red Sea, between the walls of water, to the opposite shore.

Pharaoh panicked when he saw what was happening. His slaves were getting away. He screamed, “Get those slaves!” and led his soldiers in a charge to the Red Sea. When they reached the shore, the Red Sea was still split as the last of the Israelites made their way to shore. Pharaoh and his soldiers raced down the path. Only fifty yards to go, Pharaoh thought and, by the gods, he would get his slaves back.

20. Freedom Has a Price

Once the last Israelites were safe, the walls of the Red Sea collapsed, trapping and drowning Pharaoh and his army. When it was all over, the Red Sea was back to normal. Pharaoh and his army were gone, and Moses' sister, Miriam, led the women in a rejoicing song and dance.

God cried out to Moses *"Stop them. How dare they express joy at the death of their enemy? Are not the Egyptians My creation too?"*

The Israelites saw the truth, quieted down and showed respect. What was important was that they were free. They could celebrate their freedom for the rest of their lives.

21. Life in the Desert

As a free people, the Israelites journeyed toward the Promised Land. Within a few weeks' time, all the food they had brought from home was gone.

Hungry, tired and thirsty, they began to panic as it took longer and longer to go from one oasis to another. Pharaoh had always provided something to eat and drink. Who was going to take care of them now?

Freedom at Last

21-1 Elana, a Freed Israelite Slave, 21-2 Moses

- 1: "Moses, now what? We're in the desert with nothing to eat."**
- 2: "Elana, we are free."
- 1: "Free, hungry and homeless."**
- 2: "Where's your spirit of independence?"
- 1: "Growling in my stomach."**
- 2: "Sleep. God will provide by morning."
- 1: "Moses, now it's morning. There are quail in our cooking pots!"**
- 2: "God has provided."
- 1: "Moses, it's been three days and the quail are gone. What will we eat tomorrow?"**
- 2: "Sleep. God will provide by morning."
- 1: "Moses, something is wrong. I see no quail only stuff on the ground?"**
- 2: "Elana, that stuff, as you call it, is *Manna* from heaven. Eat it."
- 1: "YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?"**
- 2: "Prepare it, like corn meal. Use only what you need."
- 1: "It seems to taste okay but it's not as good as quail."**
- 2: "When you had quail, *you took it for granted.*"
- 1: "Moses, I have *always* been given food."**
- 2: "And have you ever *thanked* anyone for it?"
- 1: "No. I didn't have to. It came with the slavery job."**
- 2: "This is different. *Thank God for the Manna* and it will be here tomorrow."
- 1: "Okay, I will do it at every meal. But it still isn't quail."**
- 2: "Too late."

22. Freedom Requires Responsibility

God watched and listened as the Israelites whined and complained, just like children want their parents to do something for them. God saw that the Israelites didn't even try to do anything on their own — they waited for Moses to tell them what to do. After so many years of slavery, the Israelites *lacked the ability to make decisions, try something new or believe in themselves.*

After much thought, God made a decision — to reveal the Promised Land to those who had never been slaves—the Israelite children and grandchildren. To give the children time to grow up in freedom and have children who would be born free, the Israelites would have to wander the desert for forty years before reaching the Promised Land.

Freedom Forever

22-1 God, 22-2 Moses

- 1: **"Moses, tell the Israelites *they will never reach the Promised Land.*"**
- 2: *"YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?"*
- 1: **"Tell them *they are still slaves in their hearts.* They want Me to do everything for them. They will never change."**
- 2: "I can't. They just need time to adjust. They are confused. This is all new to them."
- 1: **"My mind's made up. They shall wander in the desert for forty years."**
- 2: "We've been through so much. I can't tell them that."
- 1: **"Tell them it is their children and their children's children who will live in the Promised Land."**
- 2: "Why? We've done everything You've asked of us—and now nothing?"
- 1: **"The children have never known slavery. They are the ones who are truly free."**
- 2: "The children are too young to take care of themselves."
- 1: **"Ah ha! That's why it will take forty years."**
- 2: "And, in the meantime, what should I do?"
- 1: **"Keep busy. Write a story about your life."**
- 2: "And what should I call this story?"
- 1: **"Personally, I'd recommend 'The Story of Passover.' But, hey, you're a free man. Pick your own title."**
- 2: "No, no. It's okay. I'm good. 'The Story of Passover' it is."
- 1: **"Good bye for now. Have fun. See you at Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments."**
- 2: "Mt. Sinai? The Ten Commandments?"
- 1: **"Don't worry. I'll take care of everything. And I promise, *it will make a great movie.*"**

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

"You Want Me To Do What?" may be used as a supplement to your family's Haggadah or in an educational setting. During the Seder, when you come to the section of telling the story of Passover, this version offers an alternative and engaging perspective.

"You Want Me To Do What?" can be used as a whole or in parts. You can read the whole Story through, read only the script portions, or blend the script portions into the formal Haggadah wherever the Seder leader chooses. In all cases, use only what you feel makes sense for your family or educational setting.

Contents: *"You Want Me To Do What?"* may be re-printed for your personal use. There are a total of sixty-two speaking parts including the introduction.

1. The narrative sections are numbered: 1, 2, 3... through 22.
 - The script parts are identified using the number of the narrative section preceding it and the number of the character: 1-1, 1-2, ... 22-1, 22-2. Each character in the script has a different look—normal, **bold**, or underlined—to help identify who is speaking. (This has nothing to do with the importance of the characters in each script.)
2. In the single-sided download, each narrative and script is on one side of its own page. The double-sided download has been formatted for printers that can print double sided and makes it easy to make a full copy for each person.

3. A sheet with the complete set of narrative section numbers and script role numbers is included if you choose to use the random pick method.

Implementation: Again, the narrative sections and scripts may be used in their entirety or in part.

- The Scripts must be printed up to three times because there are two to three parts per script. Or, you may choose to provide everyone at the table with the whole script package so they can enjoy reading and listening. Speaking parts may be assigned or randomly selected from a basket that circles the table.
- The Paragraphs may be printed one to a page. Fold the paragraph page and each script page (note some require two copies and some require three copies). Put them all in a basket and let people pick.
- The Random Assignment File needs to be printed only once if you want to use this method of random assignment. After it is printed, cut on the dotted lines, fold each piece and put in a basket.
- To send the basket around only once, divide the number of readers into sixty-two to get the number of reading parts for each reader.

Final comments:

It doesn't matter who reads what role. Part of the fun is the unintentional mix of age and gender. Often after the first couple of script roles are read, the participants get into the role playing and add their own dramatic renderings, giving the scripts even more of a sense of currency in both relevance and importance while entertaining and involving participants of all ages.

Most of all, enjoy! May it these pages lead to spirited fun and discussion. CLB

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