

## **HOW DO WE REMEMBER WE ARE FREE?**

### **Lesson plan for family/congregational education**

*This lesson plan is part of a larger lesson entitled “The American Jewess on Liberation and Freedom,” which can be found at <http://jwa.org/teach/golearn/mar06/>.*

On Passover, we are reminded that it is our obligation to tell the story of our enslavement and the Exodus from Egypt as if we were there. We must relate to the story as if we ourselves had lived it, and we must teach our children about it so they, too, can experience the gratitude—and sense of responsibility—that comes from being a free people. In this session, we challenge both children and parents to consider how we “remember” our experience of freedom.

- 1. Begin by reading aloud** to the whole group the story about the First Commandment, called “The Reminder” in Molly Cone’s book, *Who Knows Ten? Children’s Tales of the Ten Commandments*. (This is a story of a slave who is made king. His people tell him never to forget that he is king, but he knows he also must never forget he was a slave, and he slowly abolishes slavery in his kingdom.)
- 2. Ask** the following questions:
  - How does the king show that he remembers he is king?
  - How does he remember that he was a slave?
  - What is a Jewish holiday that celebrates our freedom from slavery?
  - What is an American holiday that celebrates our freedom as a country?
- 3. Split the group** into children and parents.

With the children:

Discuss the symbols and rituals of Passover and the Fourth of July. Tell the kids that we are commanded to remember our own slavery and our

own freedom, just like the slave-king in the story. Ask how we do this on Passover.

Depending on the age of the children, either:

- a) Teach about the foods on the seder-plate and their significance.
- How does the experience of each taste remind us of slavery or freedom?
  - How does the seder teach us about the story of the Exodus?

--or--

- b) Teach the “Avadim Hayinu” text from the Haggadah:

*We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt and the Eternal our God brought us out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. Now if God had not brought out our ancestors from Egypt, then even we, our children, and our children’s children might still have been enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. Therefore, even were we all wise, all had great understanding, and even if we were all old and knew Torah, it would still be our duty to tell the story of the departure from Egypt.*

- Why is it so important for us to tell this story?
- Why does the text say “We were slaves” and “God brought us out of Egypt”?
- Why, even if we all knew this story by heart, would we need to tell the Exodus story each year?
- What are the parts of the seder that teach us this story?

Now ask how we celebrate the Fourth of July:

- What are the symbols and celebratory rituals?
- Do fireworks and parades and flags teach us about the story of the Independence of the United States from England, or about the freedoms we enjoy in America, or about the Declaration of Independence?
- What would a Fourth of July “seder” look like?

With the Parents:

Read Rosa Sonneschein's 1897 editorial from *The American Jewess* and give the appropriate background from the *Go & Learn* introductory essay. (The editorial and background information can be found at <http://jwa.org/teach/golearn/mar06/>.)

Split into small groups of 3 or 4 people, and ask the groups to discuss how Passover and the Fourth of July are related.

- What are the symbols and rituals that tell the story of slavery and liberation within each holiday's celebrations?
- How do the symbols and rituals of Passover and the Fourth of July communicate the story and impact of (respectively) the Exodus and the story of American independence?
- How do you understand the metaphor of the silkworm in the *The American Jewess* editorial?
- What is the Editor's argument in favor of American Jews continuing to celebrate Passover?
- What does it mean for liberty to "become a blessing and not a curse"? What does the Editor suggest we must do for this to happen?
- Although most American Jews have no problem celebrating both Passover and the Fourth of July, do you have strong feelings about which one is more important for American Jews to celebrate?

Hand out the "Avadim Hayinu" text from the Haggadah:

*We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt and the Eternal our God brought us out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. Now if God had not brought out our ancestors from Egypt, then even we, our children, and our children's children might still have been enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. Therefore, even were we all wise, all had great understanding, and even if we were all old and knew Torah, it would still be our duty to tell the story of the departure from Egypt.*

- Why is it so important for us to tell this story?
- Why does the text say “We were slaves” and “God brought *us* out of Egypt”?
- Why, even if we all knew this story by heart, would we need to tell the Exodus story each year?
- What are our responsibilities as liberated Jews who once were slaves?

**4. Bring parents and children back together**, seating two families together in each group, and do one or more of the following to conclude the program:

- Have children share their ideas about a Fourth of July “seder” with their parents
- Ask the families to come up with a new element for their Passover seder, in which they would communicate the story of the Exodus from Egypt.
- Ask someone from the community to present about a current social action project relating to the liberation of others, and offer ways for your family groups to become involved. (For example, writing letters relating to Darfur or another contemporary issue.)

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