

Exodus 12: 1-14

(Lectionary Year A, Proper 18)

By Beth Barnett

This is a bible engagement connecting with the communal and household experience of the first Passover.

You will need:

- 6x A4 printouts of Exodus 12 Image by Chris Booth,
- 6 cardboard boxes (5-ream A4 paper cartons are perfect), covered in brown paper
- permanent marker
- red crayon.

Place one of the following in each box, along with a card with corresponding instructions (see below)

- Party poppers
- dark skin-toned plasticine
- collection of toy sheep (plastic farm animals, soft toy sheep)
- marshmallows, A4 Printout of sheep (illustration A)
- 3 pillar candles & matches;
- Jelly Babies.

Time required:

7-10 minutes

Introduction

Divide your gathering into 6 groups - and give each group a box with activity resources (see above), a marker and a red crayon.

Today we pick up the story of Moses. From the book of Exodus - we're hitting chapter 12 today - so here's a quick recap of the story so far.

Moses was born into a family of Hebrew slaves, but grew up in the Egyptian royal family as the son of the Princess. As a young man, he witnesses the oppression and violence against the Hebrew slaves (his own people) by the Egyptians (the family who have raised him), and lashes out and kills an Egyptian. Pharaoh wants to kill him, so he flees into the wilderness.

In the midst of the boring life of a hide-away shepherd, God speaks to him and sends him back to Pharaoh to demand freedom and justice for the Hebrew people. Adding punch to his message to Pharaoh, a set of extreme natural disasters have afflicted the land of the Egyptians, but the ghetto where the Hebrew slaves remains safe and unharmed.

Already Moses' life has taken a more unusual turns than the average, from slave to prince to murderer to fugitive to messenger of God.

In Exodus Chapter 12 our Bible reading picks up at the point when Pharaoh has refused to free the Hebrew slaves, but the Hebrews are about to all escape together, and our reading tells us the plan God has for this escape, and the plan God has for showing Pharaoh that the right to rule doesn't give him the right to be cruel.

Continue with Process Instructions

You have been divided into 6 groups - each of your groups is a Hebrew slave household, remembering that households were large with many family members and extras - up to 20- 40 people. Your box is your house, and inside you will find some things to help us explore the Bible.

To get started, use the marker to make it look like a slave house, adding some windows and a door. Stick the image of the Hebrews cooking the passover inside the box.

While you are doing this, look at the items in your box and the section of text that you've been given. Decide in your group who would like to read the text out loud when it is time (this can be shared) and check that you know what to do with the items. Some of the tasks should be started during the preparation time, and others saved to begin at the time of the reading with the whole gathering.

Give the groups a couple of minutes to explore their boxes and prepare their readings and activities.

Circulate through the groups to check they understand the instructions and are including all of their members appropriately in ways everyone feels comfortable with. After a few minutes - call the groups to order and begin the corporate reading of the text.

Guide the groups through the reading. Make any summary or connecting statements that you think are needed to transition well from group to group, and maintain the storyline.

Conclusion

We have seen how this episode in the life of Moses and the Hebrew slaves was a new beginning - a fresh start for them, marked by a new calendar, and celebrated every year - and still now. We saw how households shared resources, how all of the lamb was to be cooked and nothing left, because there would be no chance for left overs the next day – for anyone! Everyone was included in God's rescue. We saw how the lamb was roasted on the fire - a reminder of God's presence.

And we see the contrast between the deathly power of Pharaoh and the life-saving second chance-giving power of God.



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Instruction cards (One per household box)

1.
+ party poppers

Read:

Happy New Year!

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: “This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you.” (Exodus 12:1-2)

Happy New Year!

(pop your party poppers now)



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2.

+ dark skin-toned plasticine

Read:

Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month, they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join with its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. (Exodus 12: 3-4)

(a whole lamb feeds about 40 people. Throughout this activity, use the plasticine to make about 40 people to add to your household)



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3.

+ collection of soft toy sheep or plastic toy farm animal sheep

Read:

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you make take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat. (Exodus 12:5-7)

(examine your collection of (toy) lambs. The lamb for Passover must be perfect – check the perfection of the flock and put aside any that are not perfect. As you read the text out with the group, distribute the lambs to each of the other households (groups).)

Say:

Now you can use your red crayon to mark around your doorframe



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4.

+ 3 candles and matches;

Read:

They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs and inner organs.

You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning, you shall burn. (Exodus 12:8-10)

(As you read the text light a candle for each time you read “fire” or “burn” and display them in front of your household)



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5.

+Marshmallows,
print out of sheep.

Read:

This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly.

It is the Passover of the LORD. (Exodus 12:11)

*(lay out your sheep and cover it with marshmallow "wool".
When it is time to read out your very short passage, see if your group can eat all the marshmallows before your reader has finished reading the verse out loud)*



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6.

+ jelly babies

Read:

For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12: 12-13)

(Distribute your jelly babies to all the other groups)

Say:

While Pharaoh orders the arbitrary murder of every first born Hebrew baby to demonstrate his deathly power, God demonstrates his life-giving power by telling the Hebrew people how to protect their families as the angel of death passes over Egypt. These jelly babies celebrate the lives that are precious, protected and preserved by God's care for all who would trust him.



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