

Exodus Story

Contributed by [Ilana Silverstein](#)

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1. After the ten plagues, Pharaoh finally lets our people go, and the Israelites leave in a big hurry. They pack their bags, gather their children and livestock, toss the unleavened bread on their backs, and begin their journey. It is Pharaoh's change of heart, after refusing so many times to let them go, that allows the Israelites to arrive at this moment of freedom.

2. After being freed, the Israelites find themselves between the roaring sea before them and the Egyptian army behind them. They panic and say to Moses, "There weren't enough graves in Egypt, so you brought us to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, taking us out of Egypt? It would have been better to stay as slaves than to die here." We can learn a lot about resistance to transition from the complaints of the Israelites.

3. Sometimes in the midst of doubt and fear, it can feel impossible to take that first step forward. A rabbinic Midrash tells the story of Nachshon ben Aminadav, who walked into the sea until the water was above his neck; only after he took this great risk did the waters part for all the Israelites. Passover is our annual invitation to take that first step.

Ask everyone to imagine the moment where they can't stay in the same place. Go around the table and ask each person to say one word to answer this question: What would you need to act, to move forward, away from constriction and narrowness, toward freedom? [examples: "faith," "community," "imagination," "lightness", etc]

Go around the table and each person can answer this second question: What is one situation or pattern you've resisted changing even when you know it's not in service to living the life you want to lead?" [examples: "going to sleep super late," "my unfulfilling job," "that relationship (you know the one)," etc.]

4. There's commentary that the post-Exodus forty years of wandering in the desert was the necessary length of time to allow the generation of Israelites raised with a slave mentality to be replaced by a new generation of free people. This means that only those born into freedom were able to enter the Promised Land. We can translate this to our own lives to mean that we have to transition out of fixed mindsets and make space for new ways and paths and directions.

Remembering our own capacity to enslave and be enslaved, as well as our ability to find freedom in our lives, is one of the most meaningful practices of Passover. May we all be blessed with a Passover of liberation. May our practice be a source of strength as we find paths to freedom, and may our open-heartedness benefit all beings.