שמות יד

**Shemot 14:**

**Selection from Parshat Beshalach / פרשת בשלח**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5.** It was reported to Paro [Pharoah] that the people had fled; and Paro and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, What is this that we have done, that we have released Israel from serving us? | | |  | | **ה.**וַיֻּגַּד לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם כִּי בָרַח הָעָם וַיֵּהָפֵךְ לְבַב פַּרְעֹה וַעֲבָדָיו אֶל הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מַה זֹּאת עָשִׂינוּ כִּי שִׁלַּחְנוּ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעָבְדֵנוּ: |
| **[6](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v6)**. So he [Paro] had his chariot harnessed, and his [fighting] people he took with him. | | |  | | **ו.**וַיֶּאְסֹר אֶת רִכְבּוֹ וְאֶת עַמּוֹ לָקַח עִמּוֹ: |
| **[7](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v7)**. and he took six hundred selected chariots and every [kind of] chariot of Egypt, teams of three people upon them all. | | |  | | **ז.**וַיִּקַּח שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב בָּחוּר וְכֹל רֶכֶב מִצְרָיִם וְשָׁלִשִׁם עַל כֻּלּוֹ: |
| **[8](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v8)**. Now God hardened the heart of Paro, the king of Egypt, so he pursued the Children of Israel, while the Children of Israel were marching out ‘with a high hand’ [defiantly, in triumph]. | | |  | | **ח.**וַיְחַזֵּק יְהֹוָה אֶת לֵב פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּרְדֹּף אַחֲרֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹצְאִים בְּיָד רָמָה: |
| **[9](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v9)**. Egypt chased after them and overtook them encamped by the sea, all of Paro's chariots, his riders, and his army, [were] by Pi ha-Hirot, before Baal Tzefon. | | |  | | **ט.**וַיִּרְדְּפוּ מִצְרַיִם אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיַּשִּׂיגוּ אוֹתָם חֹנִים עַל הַיָּם כָּל סוּס רֶכֶב פַּרְעֹה וּפָרָשָׁיו וְחֵילוֹ עַל פִּי הַחִירֹת לִפְנֵי בַּעַל צְפֹן: |
| **[10](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v10)**. As Paro drew near, and the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold! Egypt was marching after them! They were exceedingly afraid. And the Children of Israel cried out to God. | | |  | | **י.**וּפַרְעֹה הִקְרִיב וַיִּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת עֵינֵיהֶם וְהִנֵּה מִצְרַיִם | נֹסֵעַ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּירְאוּ מְאֹד וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל יְהֹוָה: |
| **[11](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v11)**. They said to Moshe: Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us out to die in the wilderness? What is this that you have done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? | | |  | | **יא.**וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל משֶׁה הֲמִבְּלִי אֵין קְבָרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם לְקַחְתָּנוּ לָמוּת בַּמִּדְבָּר מַה זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לָּנוּ לְהוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרָיִם: |
| **[12](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v12)**. Is this not the very thing that we spoke to you [about] in Egypt, saying: Leave us alone, and we may serve Egypt! Indeed, it is better for us [to be] serving Egypt than [to be] dying in the wilderness! | | |  | | **יב.**הֲלֹא זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְמִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר חֲדַל מִמֶּנּוּ וְנַעַבְדָה אֶת מִצְרָיִם כִּי טוֹב לָנוּ עֲבֹד אֶת מִצְרַיִם מִמֻּתֵנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר: |
| **[13](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v13)**. Moshe said to the people: Do not be afraid!  Stand firm and see God’s deliverance that He will work  for you today, for as you see Egypt today, you will never see it again for all eternity. | | |  | | **יג.**וַיֹּאמֶר משֶׁה אֶל הָעָם אַל תִּירָאוּ הִתְיַצְּבוּ וּרְאוּ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת יְהֹוָה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אֲשֶׁר רְאִיתֶם אֶת מִצְרַיִם הַיּוֹם לֹא תֹסִפוּ לִרְאֹתָם עוֹד עַד עוֹלָם: |
| **[14](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v14)**. God will make war, battle for you, and you – be still! | | |  | | **יד.**יְהֹוָה יִלָּחֵם לָכֶם וְאַתֶּם תַּחֲרִשׁוּן: |
| **[15](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v15)**. God said to Moshe; Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel and let them march forward! | | |  | | **טו.**וַיֹּאמֶר יְהֹוָה אֶל משֶׁה מַה תִּצְעַק אֵלָי דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִסָּעוּ: |
| **[16](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v16)**. And you- hold your staff high, stretch out your hand over the sea and split it, so that the Children of Israel may come through the midst of the sea upon the dry land. | | | |  | **טז.**וְאַתָּה הָרֵם אֶת מַטְּךָ וּנְטֵה אֶת יָדְךָ עַל הַיָּם וּבְקָעֵהוּ וְיָבֹאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה: |
| **[17](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v17)**. And I, behold! I shall make the heart of Egypt hard, so that they will come in after you, and I will be glorified through Paro, and through all his army, his chariots, and his riders; | | | |  | **יז.**וַאֲנִי הִנְנִי מְחַזֵּק אֶת לֵב מִצְרַיִם וְיָבֹאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וְאִכָּבְדָה בְּפַרְעֹה וּבְכָל חֵילוֹ בְּרִכְבּוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו: |
| **[18](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v18)**.  Egypt shall know that I am God, when I am glorified through Paro, his chariots, and through his riders. | | | |  | **יח.**וְיָדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי אֲנִי יְהֹוָה בְּהִכָּבְדִי בְּפַרְעֹה בְּרִכְבּוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו: |
| **[19](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v19)**. Then the messenger [angel] of God, who had been going in front of the camp of the Israelites, moved on and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved on from [being] in front of them and stood behind them, | | | |  | **יט.**וַיִּסַּע מַלְאַךְ הָאֱלֹהִים הַהֹלֵךְ לִפְנֵי מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּלֶךְ מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּסַּע עַמּוּד הֶעָנָן מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמֹד מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם: |
| **[20](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v20)**.  coming between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel. Here were the cloud and the darkness, and [there] it lit up the night, and the one did not come near the other all night long. | | | |  | **כ.**וַיָּבֹא בֵּין | מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי הֶעָנָן וְהַחשֶׁךְ וַיָּאֶר אֶת הַלָּיְלָה וְלֹא קָרַב זֶה אֶל זֶה כָּל הַלָּיְלָה: |
| **[21](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v21)**. And Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and God caused the sea to go back with a fierce east wind all night, and made the sea into firm ground; thus the waters split. | | | |  | **כא.**וַיֵּט משֶׁה אֶת יָדוֹ עַל הַיָּם וַיּוֹלֶךְ יְהֹוָה | אֶת הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ קָדִים עַזָּה כָּל הַלַּיְלָה וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת הַיָּם לֶחָרָבָה וַיִּבָּקְעוּ הַמָּיִם: |
| **[22](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v22)**. Then the children of Israel came through the midst of the sea upon dry land, the waters a wall for them on their right and on their left. | | | |  | **כב.**וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חוֹמָה מִימִינָם וּמִשְּׂמֹאלָם: |
| **[23](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v23)**. And Egypt pursued and came in after them, all Paro’s horses, his chariots, and his riders, into the midst of the sea. | | | |  | **כג.**וַיִּרְדְּפוּ מִצְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם כֹּל סוּס פַּרְעֹה רִכְבּוֹ וּפָרָשָׁיו אֶל תּוֹךְ הַיָּם: |
| **[24](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v24)**. And it came about in the daybreak-watch: God looked out against the camp of Egypt in the pillar of fire and cloud, and He panicked the camp of Egypt, | | | |  | **כד.**וַיְהִי בְּאַשְׁמֹרֶת הַבֹּקֶר וַיַּשְׁקֵף יְהֹוָה אֶל מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם בְּעַמּוּד אֵשׁ וְעָנָן וַיָּהָם אֵת מַחֲנֵה מִצְרָיִם: |
| **[25](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9875" \l "v25)**. And He loosened the wheels of their chariots, and He led them to drive in heaviness, and Egypt said: I must flee from Israel because God is fighting for them against Egypt.    *English text drawn from: Everett Fox, JPS and Chabad Torah translations.*  Names and their translation  Hebrew Greek Latin English  Moshe (מֹשׁה) = Moses Mosen / Moses Moses  Paro (פַּרְעֹה) = Paro Haraonis Pharaoh |  | **כה.**וַיָּסַר אֵת אֹפַן מַרְכְּבֹתָיו וַיְנַהֲגֵהוּ בִּכְבֵדֻת וַיֹּאמֶר מִצְרַיִם אָנוּסָה מִפְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יְהֹוָה נִלְחָם לָהֶם בְּמִצְרָיִם: | | | |

**Leading Idea: Facts and Values**

According to Shemot, Moshe, with a raised staff, split the sea and the Israelites left Egypt, heading from slavery to freedom. Both of these are **facts** **of the narrative**. But are they also **values**? Is the act of raising your staff at the edge of the *Yam Suf* (the Sea of Reeds) something that we should regard as *worthy* rather than merely being seen as an event (worthy because it expresses trust in God, will and determination, leadership, and responsibility?)

**Values** are often seen as expressions of what is considered desirable because the things they express (freedom, safety, care, respect) are not just something we desire because they satisfy our appetite, but because they are worthy – they enable us to be the best we can be. Not everything that is desired is a value (chocolate ice-cream for instance) – it is something we desire, but not something that is *desirable* in its own right – something we consider worthy of our desire.

Escaping from Egypt becomes a value (rather than just a need/desire based on self-interest) if we consider *human freedom* itself to be *worthy* (and thus desirable). Nachshon walking into the sea becomes a value if we think it is expressive of courage and leadership (both of which we consider worthy attributes). It becomes a negative value if we think it is expressive of rashness, or bravado, or ignorance. That is to say, what we judge to be a value will depend on the criterion that we hold it up against.

Becoming Bar / Bat Mitzvah is another example of something that might regarded as fact or value. For some families, it is a fact of Jewish life, for others it is also expressive of a value.

Values can also find negative expression - the Israelites complained to Moses, that is a fact of the text – but is their complaining also expressive of value? (a ‘negative’ value – something we find *not* to be worthy?). Introducing students to this distinction can open up a new level of reflection.

Nachshon

Nachshon

**Exercise: Facts and Values:**

1. The ocean is full of fish. This is a fact. Is it also a value?
2. The sun radiates energy. This is a fact. Is it also a value?
3. Dogs are domesticated. This is a fact. Is it also a value?
4. Bread is soft. This is a fact. Is it also a value?
5. You can read. This is a fact. Is it also a value?
6. Fairness is a value. Is it also a fact?
7. Beauty is a value. Is it also a fact?
8. Health is a value. Is it also a fact?
9. Friendship is a value. Is it also a fact?
10. Are these facts, values or both?
    1. Education
    2. Freedom
    3. Family
11. Moshe leads the people out of Egypt. That is a fact. Is it also a value?
12. Hearing the Israelites have gone, Paro changes his mind and pursues them. That is a fact. Is it also a value?
13. Can you think of anything which is of value and yet would not make you happy if you had it

**Discussion Plan: Freedom as a Fact or a Value**

*Discuss the way the word ‘free’ is used in the following cases. Is it a fact or a value? Both? Neither?*

1. A shipwrecked sailor is washed up on a small deserted Island. “Oh well”, he says to himself. “I am free to do whatever I want here.”
2. A gas station sign says “Free air and water”
3. People at a demonstration are carrying signs saying “Free the refugees”
4. A parachutist sets a record for a free fall.
5. “ I bought it when I was overseas – it was tax free”
6. A shipwrecked sailor is washed up on a small deserted Island. “Oh well”, she says to herself. “I am free to leave here whenever I want.”
7. “When you come to the border” said one spy to another, “don’t be too free with information”
8. “Let me give you some free advice” I told him
9. It is only when I’m skating with my head to the wind that I feel truly free
10. In art yesterday we did free drawing
11. The school principal said “You are free to do whatever you want – as long as you are prepared to face the consequences”
12. You are free to follow my advice or not – but if you go your own way, you will die in the desert
13. The doctor said. “You are free to get a second opinion”
14. Ever since I decided what subjects to do next year I’ve felt free of this huge burden

*Below are some possible meanings of the word ‘free’ – can you match these with the phrases above?*

1. to set to liberty b. not restrained
   1. not part of a system d. without charge or cost
   2. able – having the ability to do something f. without constraints
2. living within a set of rules you accept h. uninhibited

i. frank, open j. exempt

k. easy l. living the way you want

m. to be my own agent (have autonomy) n. make my own decisions

***NOW***

***Think of the Israelites' situation– what senses of ‘free’ apply to them in their situation? (under Moshe? Under God? Deciding to leave Egypt,? At the Yam Suf? Walking between the walls of water? Coming through on the other side? As they come out on the other side?)***

**Leading Idea: Doubt, Self-doubt and Courage**

When faced with a big challenge, many of us face self-doubt. Self-doubt is a distinctly human trait. It requires us to be aware of ourselves and our own boundaries or limitations – and to judge when we have reached them. Sometimes self-doubt is warranted (we doubt that we are capable of doing something, and indeed it is beyond our ability), at other times it is the product of a lack of self-confidence (we think we can’t do something and yet were we to try it, we would find that we could). At different points in his life, even Moshe experiences self-doubt. First when God calls him to go back to Egypt and seek the freedom of the Israelites from Paro, and later as their leader. One way the Rabbis have interpreted the exchange between Moshe and God at 14:13-14 is to say that God is responding to Moshe’s self-doubt (“Can I really lead them safely forward over the Reed sea?) and to Moshe’s doubting that he has the trust of the Israelites (“If I now ask them to step forward into the sea, will they do it? Do they trust me enough that it will all work out?”).

Some commentators have also responded to the ambiguity of God’s response to Moshe” “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward” – is God speaking to the Israelites or to Moshe? Moshe says to the Israelites “Have no fear!” but maybe he was full of doubt himself and cried out to God (thus God’s response was to him: “Why do you cry out to me?” ). What is needed here is not reassurance, but action – “Tell them to go forward”. But to go forward – to act as if it will all work out - when one is full of doubt, requires enormous courage. This connection between doubt and courage puts the Israelites in a different light. They complain to Moshe and question his actions, but they still follow him. Given their lack of faith that it will all be OK, they show a lot of courage to go on anyway. Maybe this is what the passage is about – illustrating what it is to have the courage to act in times when we are full of doubt and self-doubt?

**Discussion Plan: Doubt and Self-doubt**

1. Is it possible that doubting you will win the race can prevent you from winning it?
2. Is it possible that doubting you will pass a test at school prevents you from doing well?
3. Is it possible that doubting you can succeed makes you try harder and leads to success?
4. Can you doubt your own physical abilities? If so, what might you be doubting?
5. Can you have doubts about your thoughts? If so, what might you be doubting?
6. Are there things about yourself that you *can’t* doubt?
7. Does self-doubt always involve fear?
8. Can you have self-doubt and still be a confident person?
9. Do you think having some self-doubt is healthy?

There were 4 parties in the larger Israelite group. The opinion of the first party was that they seek death by drowning in the sea; the second that they return to Egypt; the third was in favor of a pitched battle with the enemy, and the fourth thought that it would be a good plan to intimidate the Egyptians by noise and a great hubbub. **Shemot Rabba 21:5**

***Discuss this quote in light of your discussion - What role does doubt or self doubt play in each response? How is doubt related to action in each case?***

**Leading Idea: Leadership in a moment of crisis**

Arriving at the *Yam Suf* (Sea of Reeds), caught between the sea and the approaching Egyptian army, there is an interesting exchange. The sequence goes like this:

1. **Israelites** cry out and complain to Moshe"מה-זאת" - Mah Zot?” What is that you have done to us? We said it wouldn’t work - slavery is better than death as a free people.
2. **Moshe** hears the complaints and says "Don’t have fear. God will fight them off and get us out of this.”
3. **God** hears Moses and says – “Why are you talking? Tell the people to get moving, and you Moses get moving too – hold out your arm and part the waters."

We could say that there are 3 main players, each passing the responsibility onto the other. The Israelites see themselves as followers and pass the responsibility onto their leader, Moshe. Moshe passes the responsibility onto God, seeing himself as the 'instrument' of God (rather than as having to act himself). God passes the responsibility back onto Moshe and the people (shared with God – each to play their part).

**What have you done?**

1. Sam comes home from school with a torn shirt - his mother looks at him and says: “What have you done?”
2. Sarah hears a knock on the door and opens it to a complete stranger. She leaves the stranger in the front room and goes to the back of the house to get her father. Her father says: “what have you done?”
3. Ben has a list of chores to do – his mother calls from work and asks “What have you done?”
4. David’s kite gets caught in a tree – he climbs onto the roof to retrieve it. Hearing him tell his friends what he did, his parents exclaim “What have you done?”
5. When Tali confided to her friend that she had shoplifted her new earrings, her friend looked at her in amazement and said “What have you done?”
6. When I gave my sister a new sweater that I had knitted all by myself for her birthday she looked at me in amazement and said “what have you done?”
7. When Joel and Alissa’s parents told them that they had sold the house and were moving the family to Texas, they said “What have you done to us?”
8. When Barbara found out that her husband had gambled away their life savings, she cried, “What have you done to us?”

**What have you done?**

Moses also addressed himself to God saying: "O Lord of the World! I am like the shepherd who having undertaken to pasture a flock, has been heedless enough to drive his sheep to the edge of a precipice, and then is in despair how to get them down again." (**Midrash Yalkut 1:233)**

The Israelites were desperate. They said to Moses: 'Our fate will be worse than our brethren who died in Egypt. They are at least being mourned, and their bodies were buried, but our corpses will be exposed, consumed in the day by drought and by frost in the night. (**Shemot Rabba 21:5)**

In addition to praying to God, they vent their anger at Moshe, saying:" As our leader, you should have anticipated this horrific ending. You (Moshe) reacted too brazenly. (**DAAT MIKRA** commentary)



**Activity: Whose responsibility is it? The role of leadership**

* Divide into groups of four to five.
* Each group selects one of the 'story starters' below (setting and characters).

**Skit starters**

1. Jodie and her friend Kyle are babysitting the neighbor's children, Sam 7 and Ronen 11. The parents are expected home soon. Suddenly there is a big crash in the kitchen….
2. Esti and Paul are on a school hike. It has been raining all day. Mr Donavan, their teacher has been leading the way. Suddenly, …
3. Shira invites Helen to go with her on a family holiday. They both take their skateboards, however Helen is not as good as Shira. They go off to skate for the afternoon and…
4. Josh and Ilan each have a major project to submit for science. Josh has gone to Ilan’s house so they can work on them together. Ilan ends up helping Josh and doesn’t get his own finished. The next day at school…

* Start by reading the scenario. Your task is to create your own story of leadership based on the setting and characters you have chosen. As you make up your skit, you might like to think about the following:
  + 1. What is the problem your characters are facing?
    2. Who is complaining?
    3. Who takes control to resolve it? etc.)
* As you develop your skit, you need to have the '**three positions**' outlined above represented within it
  + An 'Israelite' character – follows along but complains all the way
  + A 'Moshe' character - someone who takes the lead but looks to a higher authority to solve emerging problems
  + A God character – someone who tells ‘Moshe’ and ‘the Israelites’ that they have the responsibility to act.
* Work out who is acting each part and prepare and perform the skits.
* After performing the skit, a member from one of the other groups interviews each of the three ‘characters’ to get their perspective on what went on.

**Leading Idea: Individual and Group Action**

With Moshe we move from individual journeys to the collective Journey in which the Jewish people as a group identity was formed.

1. One of the central questions here is the relationship between **individual and group action**. Is ‘group action’ just the sum of ‘individuals acting’ or is it something different? What is involved in acting *with* others?
2. A second question emerges in relation to the **interaction between leaders and the groups they lead**. Several Jewish sources explore the question of Moshe’s leadership and the behavior of the Israelites as a group.
3. A third question emerges in relation to **the power of individual action within a group context.** If the ‘will of the people’ lies in one direction, can an individual person make a difference? Can a group move forward if individuals don’t take initiative? The Midrash explores this question of action through the character of Nachshon. This also introduces the idea of the *courage* to act in the face of doubt.
   * + 1. **Individual and Group Action**

**Discussion Plan: Taking Part in Something Together**

1. Is there a difference between going for a walk on your own and going for a walk with someone else? If so, how do you experience the difference?
2. Is there a difference between reading a book on your own and reading it in the presence of other people who are also reading? If so, how do you experience the difference?
3. If you are cycling with someone and they need help, do you have a responsibility to help them?
4. If you are cycling on your own and see someone you don’t know that needs help, do you have a responsibility to help them?

*If so, would you have responsibility* *in the same way* that you would if you are cycling together with them?

1. If you are in a group and a few people complain, has the group complained?
2. What does it mean to say that a group of people act a certain way – does it mean that every member of the group has acted that way?
3. Could you be traveling in a group and yet still be lonely?
4. Do all groups have leaders?
5. Can you be a leader if you are not part of any group (if there are no people you are leading)?
6. Which of the following things do you think it would be harder to do if you are on your own than if you were doing it with someone else?
   1. Try something you haven’t done before that scares you a little.
   2. Complain to the teacher that he or she is not treating you fairly.
   3. Dance to music
   4. Concentrate on schoolwork
   5. Act in a way that is out of character
   6. Keep going with a task even when you are really tired

**Discussion Plan: Individual and Collective Will**

1. Are there times when something can only get done if *everyone* in the group wants it to happen?
2. Do you believe that whatever is best for the group to do is *really* the best for *each person* to do?
3. If everyone in a group wants something to be done, does that make it right to do it?
4. Are their ways we can determine whether people want something because it is in their self-interest or because it is right?
5. Are there times when people should follow their own interests rather than the group’s interest?
6. Do you think rules in the classroom should reflect what people in the class want, or what they *ought* to want?
7. Would you ever vote for the class to do something that you *didn’t* want to do?
8. Do you think there is ‘power in numbers’? If so, explain under what circumstances this could be constructive, and when it might be destructive.
9. Do you think that although there are many ways people live, there is actually only one *right way* to live?
10. What would the world look like if everyone lived and acted as you do?

**Activity: Forming groups with your hands**

**B. The Interaction between Leaders and the Groups that they Lead**

How many ways can you shape ‘a group’ with your hands? Which shapes would represent moshe and the people?

* How is individual and collective will expressed in each form?
* Each time you come up with a new shape, imagine where Moshe would stand in relation to the group.

**Moses, As Leader, Responds to Their Fears and Doubts**

The tradition emphasizes his [Moses] ability to pacify the myriad of Israelites, responding directly to each of their fears: “Don’t fear [*al tir’au*]. Stand firm and see [*re’u*] God’s deliverance” (14:13). Moses acknowledges their fears, but encourages them to “see” their situation differently. The sound play on *tir’au* and *re’u* underscores his response to his people: They have nothing to fear, for they will indeed no longer see the Egyptians again in the same way, as God will defeat them. The threefold occurrence here of the verb to see [r*a’ah*] is not coincidental. Fear is the product of a way of seeing, of perspective; a change in the way they see will change their feelings and thinking.

Norman Cohen (2007): *Moses and the Journey to Leadership* (VT, Jewish Lights), p.43.

**Discussion: “To See”**

*Discuss the following passage from Rabbi Norman Cohen*

1. Can fears be addressed by learning to see the situation before us differently?
2. Can seeing things a new way lead us to feel differently and think differently?

The reason that the people used the word לקחתנו was because this was the language that God used in promising Abraham that he will take his descendants to Israel. This was intended to mock the legendary promise. (**DAAT MIKRA** commentary)

The 2 words מה זאת also appear in the child's 4 questions at the Seder and serve to remind us of two questions that Jews have been asking throughout the ages (**DAAT MIKRA** commentary)

There is no mention that Moshe prayed to God concerning this, but this teaches us that Moshe stood in prayer. Whereupon the Holy One blessed be He said to him, 'It is no time now to pray at length, when Israel is in trouble.

Another explanation is to understand the verse in the sense: 'why are you crying to me?' Upon Me rests this responsibility and not upon you.'

**Rashi** commentary on verse 14

(**Rashi commentary on verse 14**)

**Leading Idea: Asking for Help**

Moshe is in a difficult situation – he has mobilized the Israelites and led them from their homes - but now he faces a body of water that blocks their forward path. He knows that the Egyptians are close behind. Standing on the banks of the river he has to decide what to do. He turns to God for help. Under what circumstances do we decide we need help, and who do we then turn to?

**Discussion Plan: When Should We Ask for Help?**

Directions: For each of the situations below, under what circumstances would you decide to ask for help? Under which circumstances would you try to handle the situation on your own? In the cases where you ask for help, from whom should you request help? Explain your thinking in each case.

* You are trying a new maneuver on your skateboard, but it is not working.
* You are failing Math.
* You don’t have quite enough money saved to get a computer game you really want.
* You are always being teased at school and hate it.
* Some kids in your class ask you for money – you think they want it to buy alcohol.
* You decide to make a bonfire with some friends – the grass around the bonfire catches fire.
* You are kicking a ball outside and it goes over into the neighbor’s yard – you know your neighbors very well.
* You see a kid from school being pushed around by a group of older kids outside the supermarket.
* You were given a big assignment to do for school three weeks ago and it is due the day after tomorrow – you haven’t started it yet.
* Your Bar Mitzvah is next week – you are nervous about reading your Torah portion and really want it to go well.
* You are in synagogue and the Rabbi asks the congregation if they would like to say a personal prayer.

***As you perform these skits for one another in the class, you might like to take a photo of them and make these into a display with a description of the scene, its characters and positions of responsibility.***

* + 1. **The power of Individual Action within a Group Context**

**The Midrash of Nachshon**

*Nachshon went first and the People of Israel followed – can a group move forward if no-one takes the first step? When overcoming an obstacle, is there a difference between taking the first step and taking the steps that follow after that? If so, what is the difference?*

**רבי מאיר אמר:** בשעה שהיו ישראל עומדים על הים, היו עומדים ומדיינים זה עם זה; זה אומר אני ארד תחילה לים, וזה אומר אני ארד תחילה. מתוך כך קפץ נחשון בן עמינדב [משבט בנימין] לתוך גלי הים וירד אליו. כך אמר הקב"ה: מה שכר יטלו בני בנימין שירדו לים תחילה? שרת שכינה בחלקו [השכינה תשרה עליהם] [הכוונה היא לבית המקדש, שנבנה בשטח של שבט בנימין], כנאמר: "לבנימין אמר ידיד יהוה ישכון לבטח עליו... ובין כתפיו שכן." (דברים לג' יב).

**Rabbi Meir stated:** “When the Israelites stood on the brink of the sea the tribes contended with one another. One said: ” I will go down first into the sea”. The other said: ” I will go down into the sea”. Whilst they were standing and shouting the tribe of Benjamin sprang forward and descended first into the sea…For this reason Benjamin the righteous one was granted the privilege of playing host to the divine presence (i.e. the Sanctuary was built in his territory as it is stated (in the mosaic blessing): ” …and he dwelleth between his shoulders” (Deuteronomy 33,12).

**ר' יהודה אומר בלשון אחר [אחר מרבי מאיר]**: ויבואו בני ישראל בתוך הים כיוון שעמדו השבטים על הים: זה אומר אין אני יורד תחילה לים וזה אומר אין אני יורד תחילה לים. מתוך שהיו עומדין ונוטלין עצה קפץ נחשון בן עמינדב [משבט יהודה] ונפל לים וקידש יהודה שמו של הקב"ה וירד לים. לכן שבט יהודה קיבל את השלטון על ישראל, ככתוב: "הייתה יהודה לקדשו ישראל ממשלותיו (תהלים קיד' ב)." אמר להם הקב"ה: "מי שקידש שמי על הים יבוא וימשול על ישראל."

**Said Rabbi Judah to him**: It didn’t happen this way, but one said: “I will not be the first to go down into the sea”. The other said: “I will not be the first to go down into the sea”. Whilst they were debating with each other, Nachshon ben Aminadab (head of the tribe of Judah) plunged with his tribe after him into the waves of the sea. For this reason, Judah was granted dominion in Israel, as it is stated: “Judah became his sanctuary, Israel His dominion” (Psalms 114,2). Said the Holy One blessed be He to them: “He who sanctified My name at the sea let him come and have dominion over Israel”.

*Talmud Sotah* 36b

Now concerning this moment in his (Nachshon's) life it is expressed in the tradition that he prayed: 'Save me God for the waters have reached until my soul…At that time Moses was praying at length and the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: 'My dear ones (the Israelites) are drowning in the sea while you linger in prayer before Me?' Moses said to Him: 'Master of the universe, but what is it in my power to do?' God responded to him: 'Speak to the children of Israel and let them journey forth and lift up your staff and stretch your arm.' On account of this the tribe of Judah merited to establish dominion in Israel as it says: When Israel went out of Egypt Judah became God's sanctified one. (Psalms 114:2) [Sotah 37a]

****

מ. גלסר



**Discussion Plan: Doubt and the Courage to Act**

1. Have there been times you needed to show courage? Give an example.
2. Can you act courageously even if you don’t feel courageous?
3. Can it ever be courageous to *refrain* from doing something?
4. Could you experience doubt and yet act courageously? Give an example.
5. Could you experience fear yet act courageously? Give an example.
6. Have there been times when you have doubted you could do something, but tried to do it anyway? Give an example.
7. Have there been times you have doubted you could do something, and decided not to try to do it? Give an example. (If faced with the same situation now, would you now try it?)
8. If Nachshon was certain that God would not let him drown, would it still have taken courage to walk into the waves?
9. If Nachshon thought that the Egyptians were about to kill him if he stayed where he was, would it still have taken courage to walk into the water?

***Failure of Courage or Failure of Imagination?***

*What did it take to make that first step – to go forward through such darkness? For a generation of slaves, was the ability to imagine that there might be something beyond servitude and powerlessness any less of a miracle than the parting of the sea?*

*Without imagination, there can be no freedom. It shapes the contours of what might still be. Of what we dare to hope. There is little that is more precious you can give your children than the freedom to imagine and the faith to strive to achieve something new.*

**Discussion Plan: Acts of Imagination**

1. Can you imagine living in a different country? (How would your life be different?)
2. Can you imagine having different parents?
3. Can you imagine the laws of nature being different than they are? Describe what the world would be like.
4. Can you imagine changing schools next year?
5. Can you imagine never making mistakes?
6. Does imagining something mean that what you imagine is possible?
7. When we imagine something new, is it always made up of elements of what we already know?
8. Can you imagine a round square?
9. If we lived on the equator and had never experienced snow, could we imagine it?
10. If we lived on the equator and had never even heard about snow, could we come up with the idea by ourselves just by imagining a cold city?
11. Is it possible that when we say “it can’t be done” what we really mean is “I can’t imagine it being done?”
12. Do we need to imagine in order to hope?
13. What role might imagination play in creating a better world?
14. What do you think it might have taken for Moshe to imagine that leading the Israelites out of Egypt was possible?
15. What do you think it took the Israelites to imagine that they could leave?

**Read the account of building the golden Calf: Shemot 32**

*Discuss the questions raised in this excerpt.*

“Aaron’s role in the incident of the Golden Calf is perplexing. The biblical account in Exodus (chapter 32) raises more questions than it answers. Why does Aaron acquiesce to the people’s demand to make the calf? Why does he not try to stop their rush, their impulsive rebellion? Does Aaron have some plan of delaying the people until Moses returns, or is he acting out of fear? How should Aaron have acted responsibly in Moses’ absence? Do we condemn Aaron for his complicity in the making of the golden calf, or do we praise him as a heroic leader doing his best amidst crisis and anarchy?

These are some of the questions which intrigue the modern reader of the Biblical story, and which have challenged interpreters of the Bible in every age. The story of Aaron’s role in the golden calf is fascinating not only in its narrow Biblical context, but because it suggest wider questions such as the role of a leader.

Kaunfer, Alvan H. "Aaron and the Golden Calf: Biblical Tradition and Midrashic Interpretation." *Conservative Judaism* 41.1 (1988): 87-94

**Leading Idea: Filling the Void**

When Moshe stands facing the *Yum Suf*, he faces a void – a gap between the past in Egypt and the future that lies before. The sea is before them and Moshe is for one moment at a loss. The Midrash says that at in that very moment Nachshon steps forth to enter the sea, Nachshon fills the void – and through his action, creates a new situation. Another moment when the Israelites turn to fill a void left by Moshe is at Sinai. Moshe has journeyed up Mount Sinai, and while he is gone, the Israelites under Aaron’s leadership build a golden calf. The void is again filled, however this time with something that is not constructive. What is the task of the leader in such a moment? How might they keep the collective journey heading in the right direction?

**Activity: Filling the Leadership Void:**

*Divide into groups – read the scenarios below and select one. If you were to step into the situation and assume leadership, what would you do? What would it require of you as a leader? What would you seek to avoid happening? What would this require for you to attend to?*

1. *You are in the middle of a lesson discussing a novel when the teacher needs to leave the room due to an emergency. Before she leaves, she places you in charge.*
2. *Two street gangs stand facing each other in the local park. They are standing there waiting for someone to make the first move. You don’t want a fight.*
3. *Your parents go out leaving you and your younger sister and brother at home. “At last we are free!” you sister exclaims, dancing around the room, “Let’s have a party”.*
4. *Make up your own scenario.*

**Leading Idea: What is a Miracle?**

Shemot 14: 19-25

Miracles link us to the ‘extra-ordinary’ – but what is extraordinary? For some, miracles point to the intervention of God, for others miracles are something that inspire awe and wonder. There are several miraculous events described in these verses - in what ways mightwe try to understand them?

* Miracles as divine intervention – going against the laws of nature
* Miracles as divine intervention – within the laws of nature
* Miracle as natural phenomena – the ‘miracle’ involves the fact that it occurs at ‘just the right moment’
* Miracles as natural phenomena – the ‘miracle’ lies in the way we see things – seeing things with awe, wonder, or radical amazement



**Discussion Plan: Miracles**

***Discuss what the term ‘miracle’ means in each of these sentences***

1. “It was a miracle he survived the accident”
2. “At Hannukah we talk about the miracle of the oil”
3. “When my baby brother was born and I saw him for the first time I thought ‘this is a miracle’”
4. “The trapeze artist performed miraculous feats of daring”
5. “My biology teacher talks about the miracle of life on earth”
6. “It was a miracle that I got my homework done on time”
7. “The magician pulled a rabbit out of the hat – it was a miracle!’
8. I used to take butterflies for granted, but now we have studied them, I think each one is a tiny miracle!

**Discussion Plan: What counts as a miracle?**

1. As I was walking home I was thinking “wouldn’t it be great to have money to buy an ice-cream” - and then I saw a dollar coin in the gutter.
2. In the storm, a bolt of lightning came down and split the tree in half.
3. I fell off my bike speeding down the hill, but came out of it without even a scratch.
4. When the apartment block caught fire, everyone got out safely
5. When the apartment block caught fire, I prayed that everyone would get out of the fire safely and they did.
6. I wake up every morning refreshed and ready to start the day.
7. When the forest fire was out of control, the wind turned and the rain came and put it out.
8. The fortune teller told my sister that she would meet someone and fall in love and she did.
9. God created the world in seven days.
10. Jonah was swallowed by a whale/big fish and survived. (*is this the same as no.8*?)
11. I prayed that something bad would happen to the boy at school who is always teasing me, and then he broke his arm.

*(How does your answer here compare to your answer to no. 5?)*

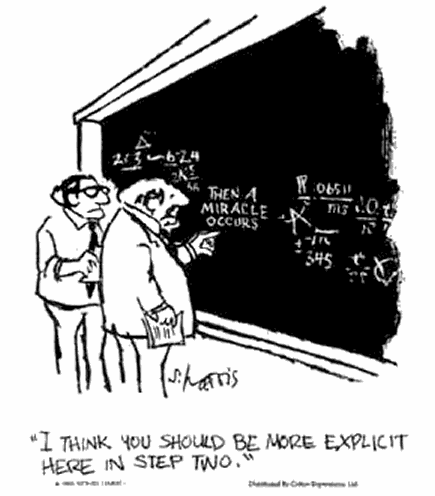
1. A standard 747 airplane weighs more than 250,000lbs when it is loaded, and

yet it can still get off the ground!

**Exercise: What counts as a miracle?**

For the items listed above (1-12) decide which word best describes it.

Miracle Miraculous Awesome Lucky Ordinary



http://rationallyspeaking.blogspot.com/2011/04/npr- on-miracles.html

<http://scienceandbelief.wordpress.com/2011/03/26/science-miracles/>

**Can Human Beings bring about Miracles or only God?**

**China’s Miracle Man**:

*Monday, July 9, 2007*. He survived against all the odds; now Peng Shulin has astounded doctors by learning to walk again. When his body was cut in two by a lorry in 1995, it was little short of a medical miracle that he lived. It took a team of more than 20 doctors to save his life.

Doctors at the China Rehabilitation Research Centre in Beijing found out about Mr Peng’s plight late last year and devised a plan to get him up walking again.

They came up with an ingenious way to allow him to walk on his own, creating a sophisticated egg cup-like casing to hold his body with two bionic legs attached to it.

He has been taking his first steps around the centre with the aid of his specially adapted legs and a resized walking frame. Mr Peng, who has to learn how to walk again, is said to be delighted with the device.

What self-confidence… and optimism…





**The Jewish Miracle**

***In the former Soviet Union we actually have to educate the people from the beginning. Many don't know what Shabbat is, what Chagim [festivals] are, what Aleph-Beth [Hebrew alphabet] is, etc. [but] there is courage.***

There is indeed a lot of courage! When I first came to work as a rabbinical student in Minsk - I grew up in St. Petersburg - I was amazed how many people actually took on their Jewishness and started to act according to their Jewishness. I was amazed at how many people chose not to hide, which is a very good sign! Every day people enter my congregation who choose to rediscover their Jewish identity. A lot of them hid their Jewishness during the Communist years and many are still afraid to accept themselves as Jews. We need to tell them every day: Be courageous! Be honest to yourself! So hopefully - that is my vision - our young people from the former Soviet Union, from Eastern Europe will go and study for the rabbinate and, which is even more important, will return to be rabbis here…. I invite all of you to come to the former Soviet Union to see with you own eyes the Jewish miracle that is happening every day.

*Rabbi Nelly Shulman, born in St. Petersburg, Russia, received her rabbinical ordination at the Leo Baeck College in London in 1999.*

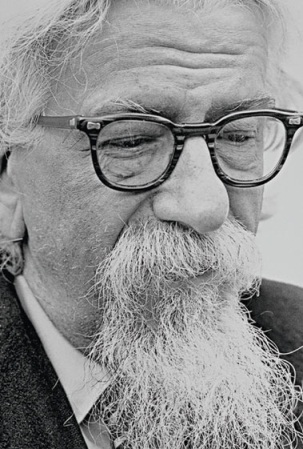
**Commentaries on Exodus 14:21**

**Ibn Ezra:** “The splitting of the sea was caused by God when Moses stretched out his hand”

**Rashbam**: “Using natural means God caused a strong east wind to blow which dried up and congealed the waters”

**Sforno**: The east wind hardened (froze) the mud of the sea floor.

**Maimonides**: Miracles are in a certain respect within nature itself. God created the world with its present physical properties, He made it part of these properties, that they should produce these certain miracles at certain times, and the sign of a prophet consisted in the fact that God told him to declare when a certain thing will take place, but the thing itself was effected by the laws of nature. … He (the Biblical author) assumes that God gave the waters the property of joining together, and of flowing in a downward direction, and of separating only at the time when the Egyptians were drowned, only in a particular place. (Guide for the Perplexed II:29; see also II:25)



**Avraham Joshua Heschel** introduces the term 'the legacy of wonder' or 'radical amazement' referring to how Biblical figures interpreted miracles and their meaning for humans living in contemporary times. He wrote: "What stirred their souls was neither the hidden nor the apparent, but 'the hidden in the apparent'; not the order but the mystery of the order that prevails in the universe." (God in Search of Man, p. 56)



**Mordechai Kaplan** explains the miracles in Jewish literature as reflecting the attempt "of the ancient authors to prove and illustrate God's power and goodness" (Judaism as Civilization, p. 98) Kaplan maintained that these traditions concerning miracles were in conflict with modern thought, and that the belief in miracles that contravene natural law is a "psychological impossibility for most people." (Questions Jews Ask, p. 155-156)

# http://www.lowdensitylifestyle.com/media/uploads/2011/01/albert-einstein2.jpg

# Albert Einstein

# “There are two ways to live: you can live as if nothing is a miracle; you can live as if everything is a miracle.”

### Evidence & Belief

The real question for moderns is not *can* miracles happen, but did they and do they happen. As Hume recognized, the question is one of evidence. Many events that were seen in the past as miracles can now be understood as due to the operation of natural laws, even though Hume himself is less than categorical about the absolute necessity of cause *A*always to produce the effect *B*it usually seems to produce.

Undoubtedly, a modern Jewish believer will be far less prone to attribute extraordinary events to a supernatural intervention, but his belief in God's power will not allow him to deny the very possibility of miracles occurring.

A Hasidic saying has it that a Hasid who believes that all the miracles said to have been performed by the Hasidic masters actually happened is a fool, but anyone who believes that they could not have happened is an unbeliever. The same can be said of miracles in general.

*Rabbi Dr. Louis Jacobs (1920-2006) was a Masorti rabbi, the first leader of Masorti Judaism (also known as Conservative Judaism) in the United Kingdom, and a leading writer and thinker on Judaism.*

**Hume on Miracles**

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/hume-miracles.asp>

**Rabbinic notion of daily miracles**: "Come and consider how many miracles the Holy One blessed be He, performs for man, and he is unaware of it. If a man were to swallow unmasticated bread, it would descend into his bowels and hurt him terribly, but God created a well in the throat of man which enables it to descend safely." (Exodus Rabba 24:1).

This idea is expressed in the daily prayer (modim anachnu lach) "For Thy miracles which are daily, and for Thy wonders and Thy benefits, which are wrought **at all times, evening, morning and night**."

**Excerise: Three Types of Miracles in Tanach**

**In the** *Encyclopedia Judaica* **Jacob Licht identifies three classes of miracles in th Bible**

* + - * **Miracles as 'signs'** (extraordinary events that demonstrate God’s power and will)
* **Direct divine intervention at critical moments that changed history**,
* **To highlight the power of a certain prophet** (God's shaliach)

**Break into groups and look up the following references – how would you catergorize these miracles? Share your results.**

**Exodus 4:1-7**

**Exodus 19:14-25**

**Numbers 16:31-35**

**II Kings 4**

**II Kings 3: 13-18**

**I Kings 17**



**'Moses'**

A Google Earth image of the Israelites crossing the sea.

By: *'The Glue Society'*

***We are all potentially Nachshon***

Imagine you are standing at the banks of the sea. Your old life is behind you and a new future is in front of you. Crossing the sea you have the chance to create the kind of world and society that enables Jewish life and all of humanity to express our best.

What would this new world be like? Focus your attention on just one aspect of what this world would be like (a value, a quality of life, a practice). What would you need to have faith in order to take a 'step forward' toward making this world a reality? What courage would be needed? What hope would guide you? What would you need to believe in?

**In the spaces below, describe the aspect of your imagined world you were thinking about. Now list the kind of courage, faith, belief and hope you would need in order to take that 'first step' into the sea.**

**Imagined World**

One aspect of Jewish life and

humanity at its best

Courage

Faith

Hope

Belief

**Leading Idea: What Makes a People Great?**

Some philosophers have asserted that **what made a people great** was not the *content* of their beliefs (what they considered valuable), *but the act of valuing* - the ***collective will* to see their values come to pass**. Others have claimed that what makes a people great is not only their collective will - but that it also depends on their efforts being **directed to *the right kind* values** (that they have the right kind of belief about what is worthy).

The Exodus is interesting because while the people express a collective will – what this will is directed toward is often not something we would regard as worthy. This is not just the case for the Egyptians (who show a lot of collective will riding out against the Israelites) but also of the Israelites themselves. We saw this in the passage from Shemot, when, at the border of the sea, the collective voice of the people complains to Moshe as they yearn for Egypt. We might say that Moshe’s task as a leader is as much to *shape the collective will around the right kind of values* as it is lead them forward.

**Exercise: Is there a right way to live?\***

**Which of the following are right for you? Check them with a ☺**

finishing High School \_\_\_\_ getting married \_\_\_\_

being honest \_\_\_\_ behaving responsibly \_\_\_\_

saving your money \_\_\_\_ being careful \_\_\_\_

never smoking \_\_\_\_ honoring your parents \_\_\_\_

wearing nice clothes \_\_\_\_ looking after people \_\_\_\_

having children \_\_\_\_ caring for the environment **\_\_\_\_**

following through on what you say \_\_\_\_thinking before you act **\_\_\_\_**

* ***Which of the ones you checked in the above list are also right for other people in your group? Put an “x” next to these***
* ***Which of these are right for everybody - across cultures, put a “!” next to these.***

*\* Exercise adapted from Social Inquiry, (IAPC NJ, University Press of America) p.122*

**Activity and Discussion: “How Ought we Live?”**

The experience of slavery and exodus from Egypt has made a unique contribution to our Jewish value system. Look up the following references. Each passage provides part of a response to the question ‘how we ought to live’ as a Jewish society.

Shemot 22:20; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Shemot 22:21-26\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Shemot 23:9\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Devarim 5:6-7 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Devarim 5:15 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***If you have not already done it, you might like to now do the activity on page 97***