

YEAR
LEVELS

7 & 8

TITLE

The Story of Moses

STRAND

SCRIPTURE

SUGGESTED
DURATION

10 weeks

ENDURING
QUESTIONS

Why read Scripture?
Am I open to listening to God's word?



Unit Focus

This unit introduces and explores the story of Moses. Students examine the story of the Israelites in Egypt and how Moses led them out of slavery to the Promised Land. The significance of the Passover and the Ten Commandments as covenant will be explored in both their historical and contemporary contexts.

Achievement Standards

By the end of Year Eight:

Students identify the significance of the covenant in the Old Testament. They analyse the story of Moses and the Exodus.

Students explain the significance of the Exodus story in Judaism and Christianity.

Unit Outcomes

By the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Articulate an understanding of covenant in biblical terms.
2. Describe key elements of the story of Moses.
3. Understand why the Exodus is a pivotal event in the Old Testament.

Key Understandings for Students

- The story of Moses is found in the Book of Exodus.
- Moses was chosen by God to lead the enslaved Israelites out of Egypt into a land promised to them by God.
- The Passover remembers the night when the Angel of Death “passed over” the houses of the Jewish families and initiated their escape (Exodus) from Egypt; it is still an extremely significant event for all Jewish people today.
- The Israelites spent 40 years wandering through the wilderness sustained by food and water miraculously provided by God.
- At Mt Sinai Moses received the Ten Commandments on behalf of his people.

- The Ten Commandments have formed the basis of life and ethical behaviour for Jewish and Christian people for centuries.
- The Ten Commandments reveal both the nature of God's covenant with God's people and their struggle to maintain this covenantal relationship with God.
- God is faithful and merciful. Each of us is called to be faithful to God. Each of us is called to participate in the living covenant today.

Student Context

Students at Years 9 and 10 are a diverse group emotionally, socially, physically and developmentally. They are capable of abstract thinking. Realising this, teachers should monitor their class and develop appropriate learning activities. Teachers need to be mindful of the diverse experiences students have had in relation to religion. Catholic teachings and explanations may have to be made more explicit in the context of exploring faith issues and experiences.

In this unit students will be challenged to move beyond a literalist interpretation and understanding of the Bible in order to come to a deeper understanding of the truths of the stories of our faith ancestors which they sought to pass down to us through their writings. The Bible is not only a record of this people's relationship with God and their faith journey both as individuals and as a community, but it has also much to tell us now of what it means to be individuals and communities who journey together in search of who we are, who God is for us, and what it means to be fully human and in loving relationship with God, each other and the whole of creation.

As it is likely that some students entering Year 7 will have little experience of the Bible it will first be necessary to examine the structure of the Bible, how it is referenced and the various literary forms it contains. Students should be called to examine some stories in the light of the prevailing social and political settings and in this way begin to understand the relevance of such details.

It is important to acknowledge the students' experience, or lack thereof, of family, school, and parish community, and to help them own their own experience and be able to build on it.

Theological Background for Teachers

Approximately one third of the Old Testament is stories reflecting Jewish understandings of their place in the world and their growing sense of a special relationship with the one true God. They, together with the prophetic and wisdom writings, form a rich collection, written over many centuries by many different authors, with a wide variety of traditions and genres.

The collection is so extensive that keeping track of what is happening in each story and what purpose/s are behind them can be challenging, and this can be the case when we read the stories of Moses and the Exodus. It is very important that we endeavour to do so as these stories essentially provide the rationale for how and when the Israelites' relationship with God was formed and how it should continue to form them as a people. These stories are held within the first five books of the Old Testament, known collectively as the Pentateuch (from the Latin for 'five books'). Jews, on the other hand, know them as the *Torah* – a word commonly translated as 'the Law' but actually having a wider meaning, being instruction or teaching.

The Pentateuch

The five Books are:

- *Genesis* – provides accounts of God's creation of the world, followed by stories of the 'patriarchs' prior to Moses.

- *Exodus* - records the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt and the giving of the covenant
- *Leviticus* - describes the obligations of that covenant
- *Numbers* – contains further laws, and continues the story of Israel's time in the desert
- *Deuteronomy* – is presented as a speech of Moses, deepening the meaning of the covenant in preparation for the people's life in the 'Promised Land'.

Central to these books is the story of God giving the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Pentateuch concludes with the death of Moses just prior to the Israelites' entry into the land of Canaan (located in what is approximately modern-day Israel).

It should always be remembered that the books of the Pentateuch were written about the relationship of God with the Jewish people; this means they should be read as religious writings not as history in the way we understand it. Their final written form was finalised many centuries after the times in which they are set, by one or more compilers or editors who wove together different earlier oral and written sources.

The Patriarchal Stories in Genesis

The stories of the patriarchs in the Book of Genesis provide the background for Moses and the Exodus. They locate Israel's origins in a common ancestor, Abraham, with whom God formed a special relationship. This was a relationship expressed in covenantal terms that was maintained through his son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob. This covenant promised Abraham's descendants would have a land of their own, the 'promised land' which came to be known as Israel.

These stories conclude at the end of Genesis with how the Jewish people came to be enslaved in Egypt, and how they came to be a people of twelve tribes. This final story of Joseph has a very different structure to those that came before it. The earlier stories were more a series of short episodes rather than whole narratives. Joseph's story, on the other hand, is the first structured as a whole integrated storyline, that provides an explanation for how the Jews came to be in Egypt.

Joseph begins as a young son of Jacob living in Canaan. He has eleven brothers who are envious of him as their father's favourite. Joseph tells his brothers of dreams which suggest he is to be their superior. In response, they sell him into slavery, and he ends up in prison in Egypt. He uses his abilities in interpreting dreams to help others, and eventually to help Pharaoh himself. He is made prime minister and prepares Egypt for the great famine he has foreseen. Egypt prospers whilst the people of Canaan suffer, and his brothers travel to Egypt for food where they come under his power. He forgives them and brings his father and family to Egypt. Pharaoh welcomes them and settles them in Goshen in northern Egypt.

The Book of Exodus

'Exodus' is a word used in two ways – it is the name of the book itself and, more importantly, it refers to the events used to explain how the Jews gained their freedom, escaped from Egypt, and arrived back in Canaan. Together they are at the centre of Jewish identity and, therefore, are important for Christians in understanding Jesus and his Gospel.

The word 'exodus' can be understood to mean 'escape'. The book begins many years after Joseph, in a time when his family has grown very numerous. It tells of a new pharaoh enslaving them, and then how they were freed, how they formed the nation of Israel, and how they came into a unique partnership with God.

The wider Bible refers to the Exodus from Egypt more than it does any other event in Israel's past, and no other event is as foundational to Jewish faith. The stories leading up to the Exodus involve individual clans or persons. The stories from this time, however, involve a 'nation' united through their covenant with God as his chosen people.

This is the second book of the Pentateuch (and therefore of the Bible). The events within it are set around the 14th century BCE, however, like the other books of the Pentateuch, its writing was completed much later in the sixth century BCE (or soon afterwards).

The key messages of the story of the escape from Egypt are:

- the miraculous intervention and action of God, in response to the cries of the people
- a great victory over the gods of Egypt, demonstrating God's total supremacy
- recalled every year in the Feast of Passover

The actual escape from Egypt under the leadership of Moses is only part of the story of the 'nation' being formed. After their escape, they lived in the wilderness for an extended period before arriving in the promised land. The story shows them as alternatively nomadic and settled, as well as supported and tested by God, with the people often failing but God always remaining faithful. It takes them many years to arrive in Canaan and Moses dies just before they do. The story of their arrival is outside the Pentateuch, in the Book of Joshua.

The first half of the Book of Exodus tells of the escape from Egypt and the second half has them camped for approximately one year near the foot of Mount Sinai (sometimes referred to as Mount Horeb). Tradition has this mountain in the southern Sinai Peninsula, though its actual location is not certain. It is during this time at the mountain that God's Covenant with the whole of Israel is established.

This account of the Exodus is foundational to Jewish faith, bringing together numerous ancient traditions regarding this act of deliverance and the covenant that were brought together by Jewish leaders at a new time of crisis for them around the 6th century BCE. The Jews had been attacked by the Babylonians, their Temple in Jerusalem destroyed, and they had been captured and deported into exile in Babylon. They were able to draw inspiration and meaning from their historic memories to bring them hope and rekindle their trust in God, who had saved them once from dire circumstances in a land far from both Babylon and Israel. The people were seeking to build their confidence that God would save them again, and reinforce the need to remain faithful, just as Moses had been.

Early Christians were also able to use Exodus language to help them understand and describe Jesus' ministry as a work of salvation.

The Place of Moses

The central figure in the Book of Exodus is Moses, who is the most important person within Jewish tradition. He is a Jewish man raised by Egyptians and chosen by God to free the people, and thereby bring them from being a collection of clans of slaves to a free unified nation able to take possession of the land God had promised their ancestors.

Moses is an Egyptian name. He is born at a time when Pharaoh is concerned by the increasing numbers of Jews so he orders that all newborn Jewish males be killed. Moses is saved by his mother who hides him in a basket in the rushes at the edge of the river. Moses is discovered by one of the Egyptian princesses and is adopted and raised within Pharaoh's household. This story shares elements with other heroic stories of the Middle East, particularly that of Sargon of Akkad, a story that would have been familiar to the final editors of the book through their exile in Babylon.

The story of Moses being saved was also used by the writer of the Gospel of Matthew to tell of Joseph and Mary escaping to Egypt from Herod when he ordered the killing of young males in Bethlehem. This helped Matthew in representing Jesus as the new Moses.

After he had grown up, Moses intervened against an Egyptian beating a Jew and killed him. He fled Egypt and settled in Midian of southern Arabia. He lived there many years, married, and became a shepherd. Whilst away from home with his sheep, he came to Mount Horeb where he witnessed a bush burning but not being burnt. This is where he will later bring his people to commit to their covenant with God.

At the burning bush, God revealed the plan to save Israel and the name “I AM WHO I AM”, expressed in the name which Jews should never say, ‘YHWH’. Moses expressed confusion and reluctance. He was commissioned to lead his people but questioned God, claiming to be unable to act as a speaker and asking God to send someone else. God persisted and Moses returned to Egypt to confront Pharaoh.

Moses' story is one of remaining faithful to God. He acted as God's emissary and called on Pharaoh to free God's people. He was supported by his brother Aaron, who later became the first priest of Israel. Pharaoh refused and Moses warned him of God's retaliation. God sent a series of ten plagues of increasing severity; after each Pharaoh promised to release the people and then changed his mind after each plague ended.

The final plague was an Angel of Death sent to kill every firstborn son, human and animal. God warned Moses and instructed him that every Jewish family was to prepare for this on the night before with a sacrificial meal of a lamb. The Jews were to smear the blood of the lamb around the door of every Jewish house, and the angel would ‘pass over’ these houses. The Angel killed all the other firstborn sons. Pharaoh released the people and they departed across the ‘reed sea’. Pharaoh again changed his mind one last time and sent his chariots after them. God intervened and saved the Jews as they crossed through the waters.

Jews have continued to commemorate this saving action of God each year through the solemn feast of the Passover and the Seder meal. It was at the time of the Passover that Jesus was arrested and crucified.

The Jews are then led to Mount Sinai where they camp for approximately one year. It is the stories of this experience at God's mountain that speak of what is foundational to their sense of nationhood. It was there that the law was revealed to them and where the Ten Commandments were given to them. It is also where the Tabernacle or Ark of the Covenant and the Tent of Meeting were constructed.

God's Covenant at Sinai

In the context of the time a covenant was a form of binding agreement and there are several recorded in the Old Testament, including between God and Noah, God and Abraham, Jacob and Laban (all in Genesis), and David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel. There are others between leaders of Israel and other leaders. They were not unique to Israel and available examples show a covenant was understood as a special agreement between the parties, sworn with the gods as witnesses, and as defining certain benefits and obligations of the relationship for each party.

The Book of Exodus records Moses ascending the mountain to meet with God for an extended period. During that time, his people became restless and began to slip back into old ways, creating a golden calf to worship. It is the first of many regressions by the people throughout the Old Testament, with God always remaining faithful to the covenant when responding.

The Covenant at Sinai is an everlasting covenant binding for all Jews. What it contains and what it means occupies the remainder of the Book of Exodus, the Book of Leviticus and a significant part of the Book of Numbers. It is immensely detailed and documents how Jews are to live and worship; the remainder of the Old Testament is essentially a cyclical story of the Jews succeeding and failing to honour the Covenant.

Scripture

Exodus 1:8 -2:10	The Oppression of the Israelites and the Birth of Moses
Exodus 2: 11-25	Moses' Flight to Midian
Exodus 3: 1-6	Moses and the Burning Bush
Exodus 3: 13-15	The Divine Name Revealed
Exodus 11: 1-8	The Warning of the Final Plague
Exodus 12: 1-13	The First Passover
Exodus 14: 5-29	Crossing the Red Sea
Exodus 15: 1-21	The Song of Moses
Exodus 16: 1-35	Bread From Heaven

Major Assessment Task

Students create a storyboard that summarises their learnings throughout this unit. The key points to be included are indicated in the following Teaching & Learning Experiences.

It is expected that students and teachers will co-construct an assessment rubric for this task. Teachers are encouraged to assess skills and knowledge from other learning areas that may be included in this task.

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity:

Students view a clip from “The Prince of Egypt” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJleW4TCQM0>

As a class discuss: What is the story? Who are the main characters? What are the plagues? Why are they being sent?

Consider also: What is a refugee? Who is a refugee? People become refugees as a result of many things - list some examples.

- Class discussion about why the Israelites were in Egypt.

Joseph is the young son of Jacob living in Canaan (modern Israel). His brothers are envious of him as he is their father’s favourite and they sell him into slavery in Egypt. Through a series of events, he becomes prime minister to Pharaoh and prepares Egypt for a great famine to come. Egypt prospers whilst the people of Canaan suffer. Joseph’s brothers travel to Egypt for food and meet him. He forgives them and brings his father and family to Egypt. Pharaoh welcomes them and settles them in Goshen in northern Egypt where they grew in numbers. A later Pharaoh is concerned about their increasing numbers and enslaves them.

Teachers view <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JD3CmUCZ5LQ> as a summary of the following unit. it is also available as a hard copy from the Library Learning Centre

<https://library.ceosand.catholic.edu.au/LBR01/#!dashboard>

Introducing Moses

- Read Exodus 1:8 - 2:10. Students respond to the following questions:
Where does the story take place?
What is the relationship between the Egyptians and the Israelites?
Why is Moses put in a basket and placed among the reeds on the river?
What happens to Moses?

Students use the information to begin to draft a storyboard (Assessment Task)

- As a class read Exodus 2: 11-25. Students in pairs complete a Scripture Graffiti (see Into the Deep p125/6) on the text (**Appendix 1**). Display students’ work; discuss their responses. Ask students to reflect on the question “Is Moses an Egyptian or a Hebrew?”

Scripture Graffiti: Students list the text reference in the top box. After reading the text and discussing the content, students record visual images, words, phrases, etc to express their understanding of the text. These are presented in the style of graffiti.

- (Before introducing this next experience, the teacher will need to have prepared copies of the questions below on cards).
Why must Moses remove his sandals?
Why is the ground holy? Where else might the ground be holy?
What is the significance of fire in this scene? What does fire symbolise?
Does a name tell us something about a person? Do you know why you have the name you have?
- Read the text The Calling of Moses Exodus 3: 1-6 with the students
Students respond to the text in a **World Café** Learning Experience.

World Cafe is a large group discussion technique designed to encourage the kind of intimate small group discussions one might have at a cafe on a selected topic. Participants sit at small tables with 5 or fewer other people. After a brief introduction, the group discusses a series of questions at their table. The discussion period for each question is timed, and people are encouraged to move to new tables between each discussion round. At the end of the small group discussion rounds, insights are shared with everyone.

At the completion of the World Café and discussions students draft another scene in their story board regarding what they have just learned about Moses.

- Read Exodus 3: 13- 15
How do you interpret God saying “I am who I am.”

It is Jewish practice never to say the name of God. So, the word is usually written YHWH. This reminds us that no name or symbol can fully express who God is.

Students record words and symbols that they use to express who God is. Share ways they can show reverence for God’s name, e.g., not saying God or Christ out of frustration.

Moses and Pharaoh

- Plagues: Using either the images from the focusing activity or the image at 3:40 in the YouTube clip from the Exodus story, students recall the first 9 plagues. Use the table and template from **Appendix 2**. Organise the students into 9 groups. Each group is given the passage for one plague. Each group is to read the scripture connected to the plague, analysing the structure of the scripture, noticing the language used to introduce the plague and the subsequent occurrence of the plague and the response of Pharaoh. Each group creates a picture of their plague and completes the template explaining the scriptural passage. The student’s work is displayed as a mural and each group speaks to their work. Students look for patterns in the language of each story.

At the completion of the task about The Plagues students draft another scene in their story board

regarding what they have just learned.

The First Passover

- Read Exodus Chapter 11:1-8.
How is the Tenth Plague different?
How does Pharaoh respond? How is Pharaoh feeling?
(To answer these questions, read Exodus 11:9-10 and Exodus 12:29-31)
- Students read 'The First Passover Instituted' Exodus 12: 1-13. They are then required to recount the story of the Passover in their own words, ensuring that they emphasise the lamb, unleavened bread and the marking of blood on the door of the house as well as what each symbolises.
Where does the word "Passover" come from?
The Jewish Passover is sometimes called the Night of Nights. Why?
What preparations did the Jewish people have to make?
Jewish people still celebrate the feast of the Passover, remembering the story of the First Passover. Refer to **Appendix 3** to explain how it is celebrated today.

At the completion of the First Passover learning experience students draft another scene in their storyboard regarding what they have just learned.

Crossing the Red Sea

- Read Exodus 14: 5-29 and watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OT0eX7FZXv4>
Students discuss what they have seen in this video clip.
What in the clip matched your understanding of this event?
What in the clip surprised you?
Do you think this is what happened?

Mention of the Red Sea in Exodus 10:19-15:22 most likely refers to the Sea of Reeds, which is part of the Bitter Lakes. It is quite likely that the portrayal of the Hebrews' passing through the sea could be a description of their passage through the swampy area that was rendered passable by the strong winds that can drive shallow water this way and that. Such a region would allow the lightly equipped Hebrews to pass through on foot but would only cause troops with kit, weapons, and armour to get bogged down. Likewise, troops on horseback and in chariots would only sink in the mud. (**Laurie Woods. *The Exodus in Israel's Religious History, Reading the Bible Ch.3***)

How has your thinking changed now?

What is a more logical or more plausible explanation of this apparent miracle?

What is the point of this dramatic story?

- Exodus 15: 1- 21 recounts the Israelites celebrating their freedom in song. Moses' sister Miriam leads the singing. Record from the scripture all the words that praise God.
Find another song about 'Freedom' and share the lyrics with a partner. Discuss why this song is about freedom and whose freedom it is about.

Moses' Family.

"The prophet Micah describes Moses, Aaron and Miriam as a leadership team sent by God." Micah 6: 4.

Aaron was the brother of Moses. He was a member of the tribe of Levi, born into slavery in Egypt. Aaron supported Moses and spoke for him before the Pharaoh. He was the first High Priest.

Miriam was the sister of Moses and Aaron. She was a co-leader of the Exodus. As an infant, Moses was sent down the river by his mother to save his life. The Pharaoh's daughter rescued him, and Miriam arranged for their mother to care for her infant brother.

Exodus 4: 10, says that when God asked Moses to speak for him, Moses came up with the excuse that he was "slow of speech and slow of tongue." Scholars have interpreted this as Moses having a stutter, therefore Miriam was often Moses' spokesperson.

- Students create a symbol that represents the collaborative leadership of Moses, Miriam and Aaron and explain why they chose that symbol. Students draw or write about the symbol on a Wall Chart. What are modern day examples of collaborative leadership where a group of people lead well? Why are they successful?

The Wilderness Experience

- Give students a copy of the map. (There are several versions online or use a Biblical Atlas) Students look at the proposed route. They explore distances using the scale provided and the proposed site of Mt Sinai.

The desert in biblical tradition is not only a place but also a theological experience. A place of dryness, aridity and desolation, the desert is also the place of waiting, of pilgrimage, of growth and fidelity. The people of God often had significant spiritual encounters in the desert. In the desert in Sinai, the Hebrews received the Covenant from God.

Numbers represent more than quantities in the world of the Bible. In Hebrew and some other ancient languages, some numbers had symbolic meanings. The number 40 generally symbolizes a period of testing, trial or probation. It is mentioned 146 times in the Bible.

Can students recall any other biblical stories that have the number 40 in them or references to the wilderness?

- Read Exodus 16: 1-35 from The Dramatised Bible (**Appendix 3**). Students read the text.

Students explain: What was manna? What are quail?

Students reflect on the questions: Have you ever felt extremely hungry? Have you ever been really thirsty? Have you ever felt as if you were in a wilderness?

Students write letters to the editor of the '*Hebrew Herald*' expressing their discontent at the difficulties of being in the wilderness.

Students write about times when they have had doubts or when their faith in something has been tested or they have lost faith in something or someone.

The Ten Commandments.

- Students study the image in **Appendix 4**.

What do you see? What is this image about? What does this image say to you?

Read Exodus 20: 1-21

The Ten Commandments are a covenant. What is a covenant (see the Theological background)? The first

3 Commandments relate to God; the next 7 relate to us.

Why did God give Moses the Ten Commandments?

- The Ten Commandments appear in another place in the Bible (Deuteronomy 5: 1-21). Ask students to find this passage and read it. Compare this text to the Exodus text.

Students make two columns in their workbooks. With reference to the passage in Deuteronomy, record the Ten Commandments from the Scripture text in Column 1. In Column 2, write the meaning for us today.

Why are the Ten Commandments still important for us?

The Passover and the Last Supper

- What does Moses' story and the story of the Exodus mean for us?
- Students watch the following clip https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaB0HRyFZ_0

What resonates with you? What is familiar to you?

After watching the clip and responding to the questions, students draft another scene in their storyboard regarding what they have just learned.

Together at One Altar is a detailed and helpful resource. The following link summarises the history of the Passover succinctly and is helpful for students.

<https://www.togetheratonealtar.catholic.edu.au/explore/passover/>

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Plagues

Appendix 2: The Passover (Pesach)

Appendix 3: Dramatised Bible Script

Appendix 4: Moses Receives the Ten Commandments Artwork