

Chapter 4

The Journey to the Promised Land Begins

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 4, “The Journey to the Promised Land Begins: The Exodus and the Sinai Covenant,” pages 88–109.
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 3 Review and Reflection Questions on pages 61, 65, 67, 70, 74, 79, 81 and 83.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Play ten to fifteen minutes of the 1956 Cecil B. DeMille classic movie: “The Ten Commandments.” (*The segment of Moses and the Hebrews crossing the Red Sea is a very dramatic one.*) Because the movie is old, students will probably laugh at its melodramatic character portrayals and old fashioned “technical effects.”
- Encourage students to overlook the movie’s dated style. What about the content? Have the class stop and read Exodus 14. Ask: “Does the movie’s account of Moses leading the Israelites across the Red Sea match that of Scripture?” Have students give examples or cite passages from Exodus to prove their points.
- In a sense, the Hebrews’ “journey” of faith began after the annihilation of Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea. There was no turning back. The Hebrews then had to follow Moses to the Promised Land.
- Collect the Review and Reflection Questions from Chapter 3 that students completed.

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, The Call of Moses, The Exodus: Confrontation Followed by Escape, The Wandering of the People in the Wilderness, (88–89)

- Make it clear to students that understanding Moses and his mission is crucial in studying the Old Testament. Moses, as they will see, is *the* central model of trust, faith, and liberation in the Old Testament. Moses led the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt towards freedom and the “Promised Land” of Canaan. The Gospel of Matthew portrays Jesus as the “New Moses” because Jesus also led his people out of slavery—the slavery of sin—to freedom.
- Have students briefly read Exodus 2:1–10, the story of Moses’ birth and rescue as a baby. Compare this Moses story with the Sargon birth story as it is summarized in the text. Ask students to explain the significance of the rare birth stories in the Bible.
- Summarize and review the material on the call of Moses from the burning bush. Revisit issues raised by the sidebar, “Does God Have a Name?” on page 91. The ancient Hebrews perceived God as mysterious and unapproachable. God should be known, they said, by what he does, not by a word or words. It’s true that words can’t tell us who God is. And our names often tell what someone does. Even the name “Jesus” means “Yahweh Saves.”
- Ask: “How is Moses an ‘anti-hero’? What are the four objections Moses gives to God when he’s asked to lead the Chosen People out of slavery to the Promised Land?”
- Pass out 8 1/2” x 11” maps of ancient Egypt, Canaan and the Mediterranean Area. The maps should have detailed physical features, Old Testament locations, and a mileage scale.
- With markers, have students trace a “fast track” route for the Hebrews to Canaan from northern Egypt. They can consult the book of Exodus to locate any place names. They should also estimate the distance in miles.
- Then display a larger map illustrating the Exodus route believed to be the one that the Jews really did use. Have students mark the true route with a different colored marker. They should estimate the distance in miles. (*Recommend an interactive website for extra research on the Exodus route: <http://tlc.discovery.com/convergence/Moses/map/map.html>*)
- Make sure that students are familiar with the terms “murmuring” and “elders” and know how they fit in the story of Hebrews’ wandering in the wilderness.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments. If possible, provide some simple Passover foods — unleavened bread or matzah, grape juice as a substitute for wine and Haroseth, a mixture of apples, walnuts, juice and cinnamon.

- Direct students to do the Journal Assignment on page 193. Ask students to extend the assignment a bit further. In addition to the issue of being trusted by others, they should briefly consider the need to trust God and others. God trusted Moses to lead his people to freedom. But, Moses also had to trust God at every twist and turn of the Exodus journey.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: The Reception of the Law at Mount Sinai, Three Collections of the Law, The Approach to the Promised Land, Further Reflections (99–109).

- Divide students into groups of four or five. They are to imagine that they are tourists from different countries who've been shipwrecked on a desert island. The island provides plenty of food and shelter but the tourists will need to form a community to survive. They won't be rescued for at least six months. Each group must create six rules or commandments to help assure order, security, and survival for all. (*Allow fifteen minutes for this small group activity.*)
- Have the groups share and compare their rules. How did these rules help to protect relationships in the community?
- Now read aloud and consider the Ten Commandments as they are given in Exodus 20:1–17. Provide an abbreviated version on a flip chart or overhead projector overlay. Ask: How do these commandments protect rights and relationships? (*Make sure that students recognize that the first three commandments focus on our relationship with God.*) Ancient Israel saw these Ten Commandments as simply part of Mosaic law. Today, these commandments are a universal code of conduct for all Christians and Jews. They can also be related to the two Great Commandments that Jesus endorses (Mt 22:37–40 and Mk 12:30–31). Give students a printed copy of the Ten Commandments to keep.
- Summarize the text presentation of the three collections of laws in the “books of Moses”—the Covenant Code, Deuteronomic Code and the Levitical Code.
- The Covenant Code was probably older than the Deuteronomic Code which reflected the social justice concerns of the prophets. The Levitical Code dealt with priestly laws and traditions, the laws of sacrifice, the purity laws and the jubilee laws. In addition: a) All three codes included civil laws (laws pertaining to everyday issues) and religious laws. b) Biblical laws focused on restoring community—not on punishment of the offender—**restorative justice** rather than **punitive justice**. (*Define terms and give examples of a restorative justice approach and a punitive justice approach to the same crimes or violations.*)
- Followers of Jesus can see and imitate the spirit of justice and community of Mosaic Law in the Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount which the Lord preached and promoted.
- Jubilee year laws dictated that every seven years, during a sabbatical year, all indentured servants were to be freed and all lands were allowed to rest. Every forty-nine years, tribal lands were returned to the original owner families, and the land was redistributed.
- Conclude the lesson by finishing the Moses story. Read Deuteronomy 32:48–54 that describes the last days of Moses and the continuation of the Israelites into the Promised Land—without him.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Light the prayer candles.
- When the group is settled and attentive, listen to several recorded African American Spirituals based on Exodus themes—slavery, freedom, God's guidance, wandering through the wilderness, Moses, etc.
- Invite students to offer prayers of petition for those who are enslaved and dreaming of freedom. The prayers can be specific for particular individuals whom students know or can be more general in nature.
- Read together “Called to Prayer” on page 109.
- Conclude by singing a spiritual together.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign Chapter 4 Review and Reflection Questions. But, in a Jubilee spirit, allow students to choose and answer just one question (not the usual three questions) on pages 89, 93, 97, 99, 102.
- Have students read Chapter 5, “The Journey Takes New Shape: A People at Home” (pages 112–129) for the next session.