

LAB / SHUL

# A Passover Storah telling

written for the Shabbat ShaMorning Community  
by Shira Kline and Stephanie Guedalia

**For families with children ages 2-8 years old.**

Shabbat ShaMorning is a weekly Lab/Shul program with Shira Kline in collaboration with Ellen Allard and Stephanie Guedalia, and in partnership with RJ on the Go.

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**The Passover Storah telling includes four Torah portions from the book of Exodus:**

## **Shmot**

Miriam and Yocheved save baby Moses. He grows up and sees how stuck everyone around him feels. Moses meets the Burning Bush and sets out on an adventure with his sister Miriam and brother Aaron to help the people get unstuck!

## **Va'era**

We get into a POWER STRUGGLE! Moses says, “let them go!” Pharaoh says, “no!” And seven plagues hit the Land of Stuck.

## **Bo**

Pharaoh’s heart keeps opening and closing, opening and closing, opening and closing until finally after three more plagues, he lets the people go!

## **Be’shalach**

The Waters of the Deep lead the way for Miriam and the children to dance across the Sea of Reeds.

## **Note to the Storyteller**

Have fun! Enjoy each word as it leaves your mouth! If there is a song and you know the melody-sing it! If you don't- make up your own melody or just speak the words. They're powerful on their own. Make sure you pause to hear your listener's reactions. Echo back what they say. Validate the brilliance of each and every question and idea. Consider this opportunity, especially if you are virtual, as an invitation into visual theatre. Take time to tell with your eyes, your breath, your hands, your gestures, your focus.

## **A Statement on Lab/Shul's God Language**

The notion of God is a personal and unique experience for each individual. In our search for authentic, common, spiritual ground, we replace the reliance on one biblical "God" with a multiplicity of names and prisms that inspire a sense of wonder and reflect the diversity of historical, modern and personal interpretations of what is ultimately beyond language.

This is a God-optional text. We hope that for those whom the word "God" is a barrier, find themselves at-ease in reading these adventures between humans and the more-than-human world. For those who are seeking the Divine in all its forms, you might find interest in our choice of God-name translation:

Where the text uses the name YHVH, we translate to Breath or Breath of Life (inspired by Rabbi Arthur Waskow's teaching along these lines).

Where the origin text uses the name El, we translate to Connection (inspired by the double meaning of the word El or אל in Hebrew which means Deity and is also a connection-word like, "towards" or "to")

We also explore the idea of the four Elements as a way of referring to the Divine, so you'll find Earth, Water, Air/Wind and Fire capitalized.<sup>1</sup>

"Open Heart" and "Highest Heart Self" are how we translate the idea of the Divine as the wise and healing voice inside each of us.

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<sup>1</sup> This idea was inspired by the way Rav Kohenet Jill Hammer talks about the Elements in her dream manuscript.

**This is a story about the Children of Yisrael, a family tree, a tree of lineage where some are born...and some come join...**

**Come close, come close, because this story is for everyone.**

Once upon a time,  
Yaakov's family was living in Egypt. Yaakov's nickname was Yisrael: the one who struggles and stays<sup>2</sup> Connected.  
So his children were called The Children of Yisrael.  
They were a big, big family!  
There was Ruven, Shimon and Levi.  
There was Yehudah, Yisasscar, Zevulun.  
There was Deena, Dan, Naphtali.  
There was Gad, Asher, Yoseph, and Benyamin.

One day, Levi had a daughter named Yocheved.  
Yocheved grew up to be a midwife! A powerful woman who helps bring babies into the world!  
How cool!

And boy oh boy was she busy!

The Children of Yisrael were fruitful and multiplied, as they say.  
They had children, who had children, who had children,  
who had children who had children  
and so on and SO ON!  
Until one family  
became a WHOLE nation.  
The Children of Yisrael lived in Egypt along with the Egyptians. They were full of Love, Energy,  
and Connection  
to each other and to the Earth.  
Family trees loving family trees and dancing with each other.

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<sup>2</sup>Learn more about this translation on page 16.

All of this happened over the course of four hundred years.  
Can you imagine that?  
A lot can change in that time...and not always for the best...

The powerful people in charge saw all this big big big Connection and Love. And they thought that, in order to keep their power, they had to take power away from others. So they began working to dis-Connect the people.

And you know what...

It worked.

The Children of Yisrael and the Egyptians turned against each other. They stopped working with each other and made people work for each other.

The power grew bigger...

...and bigger

...and bigger.

And the Connection grew smaller and smaller...

Until everyone felt very, very stuck.

Until they no longer remembered what it was like to be Connected to each other and to the Earth.

(Don't worry everyone...this story has a happy ending.)

So one day, Yocheved had a baby of her own! Miriam!

Miriam was full of Life! And was always working to listen to her Highest Heart Self. She saw how stuck everyone around her felt.

And she knew

there had to be another way.

"Hmmm..." she thought "Connection starts with the Earth."

Mama Yocheved and Miriam came up with an idea. They would use the magic of the Nile River.

You see,

the Nile River was a stream of Water that

ran through the Earth,

rushing with the Wind,

with the passion of Fire,

to Connect everyone and everything.

When Miriam's little brother Moses was born, they bundled him up and placed him in a basket on the river.

As Baby Moses flowed down the river, Miriam followed, to watch what the Water would Connect him to...

And what do you know! The Water brought Moses, a child of Yisrael to...Batya. A beautiful Egyptian woman! The daughter of Pharaoh - daughter of THE POWERFUL.

Miriam smiled. "Magical Waters of Connection!" she said aloud. "There is hope!"

Baby Moses grew up as an Egyptian prince. He was a child of Yisrael and an Egyptian. He was Connected to everyone and everything. As he grew up he saw how stuck and dis-Connected everyone around him felt.

And he knew  
there had to be another way.

He left home and became a shepherd, living among the animals, Connected to Nature and the Earth.

Connection starts with the Earth.

He was wandering around with his sheepies when he saw something magical!

It was a bush (like a tiny family tree) and it was on Fire!

But wait--

Normally when branches are on Fire they fall apart...

dis-Connect.

But these ones....these branches...

Stayed (Yisra)

Connected (El)

"Woah!" said Moses aloud.

"Woah."

"Hello hello!" said the Fire

"A TALKING FIRE!" Moses was shocked!

“Yes indeed,” the Fire said, “I am more than just a Fire. I am the ever Present Connection between ALL THINGS. The Water that guided you to Connect with the Pharaoh’s daughter, flowed through the Earth on which we all stand. The Air you ran through to come become a shepherd is giving oxygen to keep my Fire aflame. You ran away from the stuck-apartness, to come be Connected with Nature, with the Elements.

Now you must return to the land of stuck-ness...and help to bring the people together.

“Woah.”

So Moses left.

He ran on the Earth, through the Air, like a speedy stream of Water, with the Fire of passion in his heart!

And... Connected back with his sister Miriam.

“Hi,” he said. “I think it’s time for a serious adventure.”

Miriam and Moses invited their brother Aaron to help his people get un-stuck!

They walked RIGHT up to King Pharaoh. There he was  
on his throne  
all alone  
with ALL his power.

Now you might be asking yourself, “Power? You mean super power? Like....Wonder Woman? PJ Masks?”

And those superheroes are GOOD! In fact, they’re AMAZING!

Yeah.

See, some powerful people use their power

to SHARE,

to Connect,

to GIVE power to everyone!

And some powerful people.....like King Pharaoh...use their power

to KEEP,

to dis-Connect,

to TAKE power from everyone.

“I wanna be in charge of EVERYTHING! and everyone has to do things MY WAY!!!”

That's the kind of power King Pharaoh had.

So there was Pharaoh.  
on his throne  
all alone  
with ALL his power.

Moses took a deep breath  
and listened to his Open Heart.

"Pharaoh!" said Moses, "Would you let the people go? To laugh and sing and dance and play in the desert, like they want to?"

Pharaoh heard Moses' words and knew they came from an Open Heart...but Pharaoh...his heart was VERY CLOSED.

"No!" said Pharaoh "No. No. NO!"

"Are you sure?" asked Moses, "Can't you open up your heart a LITTLE bit and let the people go?"

"No!"

"Hmmm," thought Moses, "You think you've taken ALL the power, don't you?...Well guess what. No matter WHAT you do, you can never take away the power of Connection. The people are Connected to the whole Universe, so trust me, you better let them go! Or else!"



And Pharaoh said, "No!"

So some really yucky things started to happen...

*(Selected lines below are set to the music of "Ten Plagues in Egypt Land" by Ellen Allard, including God-optional edits, with permission by the composer. All lines intended to be sung are flanked with 🎵)*



# 1.

 Blood in the Water made the river run red. 



“Hey!!!” Pharaoh yelled! “What happened to all my Water?”

 “You shoulda listened to what I said.” 



“Oh...” Pharaoh’s heart opened a little bit... “Mmmmmm...NO!”

So...

# 2.

 Frogs were jumping in Pharaoh’s hair. 



“Hey!!! What are these frogs doing in my hair?”

 You need to start being fair. 

“Oh....” Pharaoh’s heart opened a little bit...more...“Mmmmm.....NO!”

So...

# 3.

 Creepy, crawly, itchy lice. 



“Hey!!! Why am I so itchy??”

 You shoulda listened to my advice. 



“Oh....” Pharaoh’s heart opened even a little bit...more...“Mmm...NO! you still can’t go!”

So...

#### 4.

 Filthy flies so dirty and vile. 

“Hey!!! Get these flies out of here!!!”

 Watch out this could go on for a while. 



“Oh....” Pharaoh’s heart opened even ...more...“Mmm.....NO!”

So...

#### 5.

 The cattle and the horses and the oxen died. 

“Hey!!!” Pharaoh yelled! “But I want milk with my cereal!!!”

 You shoulda listened when the people cried. 

“Oh....” Pharaoh’s heart opened a bit more. “Mmm,” he thought.  
...and thought....



“NO!”

So...

#### 6.

 Boils and blisters on his skin. 

“Hey!!!” Pharaoh yelled! “My skin hurts!!!”

 If anyone’s stuck then no one can win. 

“Oh....” Pharaoh’s heart opened even more!!! “Mmm....  
NO!”

So...

## 7.

🎵 The hail rained down from the sky on high. 🎵

“Hey!!!” Pharaoh yelled! “I wanted to play outside!!!”

🎵 Keep your heart open you gotta try! 🎵

“Oh....” Pharaoh’s heart really did open so much more “Mmm...NO!”

It was a power struggle for sure!!

A LONG one!

“Pharaoh!” Moses had had enough! “Why won’t you let the people have any power? Why won’t you let them go?”

“Because I’M the one who has POWER NOT YOU!!!”

So...

## 8.

When Pharaoh sat down to eat dinner...

🎵 Swarms of locusts ate the crops 🎵

“Hey!!!” Pharaoh yelled! “What happened to all my veggies??”

“Now you taste what WE taste!” Moses said, “You don’t let the people have veggies. We eat big dry crackers! Don’t you understand?”

“Hmmm.....” thought Pharaoh, and he cared about the people.....for 30 seconds...he imagined them eating their crackers, “NO!”

So....

## 9.

When Pharaoh got ready to go to the playground

🎵 Dark descended in the light of the day. 🎵

“Hey!!!” Pharaoh yelled! “I can’t play my games!”

“Now you see what WE see!” Moses said, “You don’t let the people have play time. You keep them stuck at work all day! Don’t you understand?”

“Hmm...” thought Pharaoh, and he cared about the people...for a minute...he imagined them working hard, wishing they could play... “NO!”

So.....

## 10.

When Pharaoh went over to find his בְּכוֹר<sup>3</sup> *Bechor*.<sup>4</sup> His FFAaavvvoOOOrriiTee things! The one he Loves to choose...favorite-

🎵 Favorite ones, the final blow 🎵

“Hey...” Pharaoh turned to Moses. “What’s going on? All my favorite things to choose my-my favorite...is gone!”

“Now you feel what WE feel!” Moses said, “You don’t let the people choose to do ANYTHING they want! Don’t you understand?”

“Ohh...” thought Pharaoh, and he felt for the people...“They don’t have any choices...they don’t get to have favorites.”

He imagined them, wanting to eat their favorite food...

“Wait,” he remembered “They don’t get favorites.”

Pharaoh felt for the people...He imagined them, wanting to play their favorite game.

“Wait,” he remembered “They don’t get to choose”

So Pharaoh continued to feel for the people. He imagined them, looking for their favorite stuffed lovey--

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<sup>3</sup> Learn more about this translation on Page 16

<sup>4</sup> Learn more about this translation on Page 16

“Wait,” he realized “they don’t have choices, they don’t get to have favorites, no NOTHING.”

“Finally,” Pharaoh Screamed! “I HATE IT I HATE IT I HATE IT! Stop making me THINK about all these sad things!!!”

And he chased Moses out of the castle, he chased ALL of Moses’ people out of the capital city, he chased ALL of Moses’ people, OUT OUT OUT of the Land of Stuckness.

“That’s it!” Pharaoh yelled as he booted them out the gates. “Leave me alone!!!”

And with that Moses’ people,  
our family tree, the tree of our lineage where some are born...and some come join...  
Had room...  
To BLOOM!

They took in a deep breath.  
Pharaoh's heart was open, but would it close again?

They packed as fast as they could and they made their flat crackers, and they tied their shoes as quickly as possible...

At the stroke of midnight, the Children of Yisrael took their FIRST steps into freedom. They were on their way! One foot in front of the other, they walked in a new direction...To a place they had never been...A kind of...wilderness...They arrived at a big beautiful SEA. Water as far as the eye could see when...

Meanwhile,  
back at the King’s palace...

Well, poor Pharaoh and his dis-Connected heart  
sat all alone on that throne...  
And his heart  
closed up again.

“NO!”  
Yelled Pharaoh and his heart closed SHUT.  
“I changed my mind! I will not let you go!!!”

Uh oh...

Before you knew it, King Pharaoh had caught up with the Children of Yisrael. And there they all were at the Sea of Reeds.

What were they gonna do?

They looked to their left, and there was King Pharaoh.

They looked to their right, and there was the Sea.

They had nowhere to go!

They were stuck!

AGAIN!!!

So they paused.

And they took a deep breath.

And....

The Breath breathed with them....

Remember that Breath? The Breath that has been here since before there was a before?

It went out and hovered over the Water.

Remember the Waters? The Waters of the Deep that have been here since before there was a before?

The Breath of Calm grew into the Energy of Chaos and....

WOOOSHHH The Waters roared into the air above, splitting in half like two waterfalls!

A path of Earth, right down the middle, for them to walk forward!

Behind them, a pillar of Fire arose and King Pharaoh couldn't see where the people went.

Boy oh boy was he scared!

The Children of Yisrael walked- no they danced- all the way to the other side!!!

*(Selected lines below are set to the music of "Miriam's Song" by Debbie Friedman, including edit from "women" to "children", with permission by the composer. All lines intended to be sung are flanked with 🎵)*

🎵 And the children, dancing with their timbrels 🎵  
🎵 followed Miriam as she sang her song 🎵  
🎵 Down the path the Waters provided 🎵  
🎵 Miriam and the children 🎵  
🎵 danced and danced the whole night long 🎵

And so...with the leadership of Miriam, Aaron, and Moses, the Children of Yisrael made it into the wilderness.

And the Waters closed behind them so no one could follow.

What would they eat?

Don't worry. There was plenty of food to be found.

What would they drink?

Don't worry. There was plenty of Water to be found.

Where would they go?

Don't worry.

They were well on their way to a journey of adventure!

**TO BE.....  
CONTINUED!**

## Footnotes from our Storhtelling

### (Page 4)

**Yaakov's family was living in Egypt. Yaakov's nickname was Yisrael: the one who struggles and stays Connected.**

שָׁרָה (v) heb

contend, have power, contend with, persist, exert oneself, persevere

1. (Qal) to persevere, contend with

Source: מקור: Open Scriptures on GitHub  
Creator: יוצר: Based on the work of Larry Pierce at the Online Bible

שָׁרָה

to fight, strive, contend.

1. (— Qal)

1. he fought, strove, contended (Gen. 32:29, Hos. 12:4).

[Arab. *shara(y)* (= he was angry), *shāra(y)* (= he contended). Prob. related to שָׁרָה.] Derivative: מִשְׁרָה. cp. the first element in יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Source: מקור: Klein Dictionary

Creator: יוצר: Ezra Klein

יָשָׁר □

1. to maintain, support.

2. (— Hiph.)

1. he caused someone to maintain or support.

Source: מקור: Klein Dictionary

Creator: יוצר: Ezra Klein

### (Page 12)

**When Pharaoh went over to find his בְּכוֹר *Bechor*. His FFAaavvvoOOrrriiITee things! The one he Loves to choose...favorite-**

בָּכָר *Bechor*

2. (— Pi.)

4. he preferred.

3. (— Pu.)

2. was preferred.

Source: מקור: Klein Dictionary

Creator: יוצר: Ezra Klein

“Favorite” This is also a play on words. In the source text the word *Bechor* is spelled with a כ. When same word is spelled with a נ instead of a כ it means “to choose”. This homonymic word play paired with the above Ezra Klein translation of the source word בָּכָר as “preferred” led us to the translation of “favorite”.



## Musical Credit

Ten Plagues in Egypt Land

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