

Such Sorrowful Sweetness

Topic

Passover, Challenge and Response

Grade Level(s)

5th – 12th

Big Ideas

People can feel a deep connection to a place even when that place presents great danger.

People can feel rooted to the place where they live and still long for another place that is either real or an ideal.

Learning Targets

Learners will:

1. Understand why refugees might want to remain in their homes
2. Internalize how people could feel unmoved or inspired by the last lines of the Haggadah depending on their individual realities
3. Create a Haggadah page based on their own aspirations

Materials / Technology Needed

- Videos and articles of people explaining why they don't leave. Suggested options include:
 - [TED Talk on Why People Returned to Chernobyl](#)
 - [Home Video of Woman Explaining Why She Is Staying in Ukraine](#)
 - [Article about Why Jews Remain in Iran](#)
- Device and screen on which to show videos and/or articles
- Devices for shooting videos (optional)
- [AnswerGarden](#) or other word cloud generator (optional)
- Haggadot
- [Canva](#) or other page making software/app (optional)
- Art supplies for creating a page in a book (optional)

Background for Teachers

According to the numbers given in the Torah, *Yetziat Mitzrayim* can be viewed as one of the largest refugee situations in the history of the world. According to the Torah, more than 600,000* men of fighting age left Egypt (*Shemot* 12:37), which would likely mean a total number of over two million people leaving at one time. The refugees who left Egypt found

Relevant Vocabulary

יציאת מצרים (<i>Yetziat Mitzrayim</i>)	The Exodus from Egypt
בנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (<i>B'nei Yisrael</i>)	The Israelites
שְׁמוֹת (<i>Shemot</i>)	The Book of Exodus
בְּמִדְבָּר (<i>Bemidbar</i>)	The Book of Numbers
מִכּוֹת (<i>Makkot</i>)	Plagues
יְרוּשָׁלָם (<i>Yerushalayim</i>)	Jerusalem
גָּלֻחָה (<i>Galut</i>)	Jewish Communities Outside of Israel (literally: exile)

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the journey to their new homeland to be an arduous one as they encountered combative nations and lack of food and water along the way. Several times, they are seen complaining about the lack of resources they have on the journey and desiring to return to their previous lives (e.g. *Shemot* 15:22 – 24, *Bemidbar* 11:4 – 6).

This part of the narrative accounts only for the members of *B'nei Yisrael* who departed Egypt as part of the Exodus. According to Midrashic tradition, only 20% of *B'nei Yisrael* actually left to go to the Promised Land. 80% of the people chose to stay behind in Egypt—though with dire costs (*Midrash Tanhuma, Beshalah* 1:4 and *Rashi* on *Shemot* 10:22, 13:18).

This might seem like an irrational decision for so many people to stay behind in a country ravaged by the destruction of the 10 *Makkot* and in which they are considered to be a lower class of people. However, even today many people choose to stay in difficult situations rather than flee their homelands. Many people choose to stay in the places where they grew up, where their ancestors are buried, where they know the language rather than uproot their entire lives for something unknown. Others choose to stay because they are too old, poor, or sick to leave even though they might want to leave.

Next Year in Jerusalem

These conflicting feelings of moving to a new place and staying in the place that has been one's home for decades or longer have been part of the Jewish experience for centuries. While the Jewish people as a whole profess a longing to be in *Yerushalayim*, many individuals feel that they have made homes in *galut*. These opposing feelings come to the fore at the end of the Seder, when participants traditionally proclaim *לשנה הבאה בירושלם* (*L'shanah haba'ah b'Yerushalayim*, Next Year in Jerusalem).

This line was added during the Middle Ages and first cited by Rabbi Isaac of Tyrnau in the 15th century (*Sefer Haminhagim*, Custom of Passover), a time that the Jews of Ashkenazic lands dealt with harsh anti-Jewish laws and violence. At the time, the messianic hope for a Jewish return to the Land of Israel was very real. As the reality of living in *galut* has changed over the centuries, though, the power of the culminating words has evolved. For the many people who are happy in their homes, this phrase is simply part of the words that must be read in the Haggadah; while, for others, these words continue to present an aspiration to be in the Jewish homeland.

*Note that these numbers are based on the traditional understanding of the word אלף as meaning 1,000. Some opinions understand the word to mean some variation of the word *unit*. That would change the understanding of the Torah's words to mean that 600 fighting units left Egypt, which would probably be around 6,000 – 12,000 men total. However, traditional commentaries follow the count of 600,000.

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Prepare in Advance

Let learners know that they will be coming to class in the role of someone leaving Egypt as part of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and that they should dress up in character. Assign roles; these could include teenager, parent, grandparent, younger sibling, etc.

If possible, arrange to have a discussion space outside of the regular one. This will enable learners to move one place to another like *B'nei Yisrael* leaving Egypt.

Description of Activities

1. Learners dress in character for departure from Egypt.
2. Lead learners out of the classroom to another room appropriate for class discussion.
3. Ask learners how they feel about leaving Egypt and heading to the Promised Land.
 - a. Learners will likely express a mixture of excitement and loss—excitement because they are leaving slavery and heading to the Promised Land, loss because they are leaving what they know and possibly people they care for as well.
 - b. Tech Options:
 - i. Make a short video of learners explaining how they feel. This video can be edited to look like a news report, a YouTube video, etc.
 - ii. Instead of talking about how they feel, learners enter their thoughts into a word cloud and compare and contrast what feelings are common and uncommon.
4. Show video and/or article of people explaining why they are staying in the homelands even though circumstances might dictate that they should leave.
5. Discuss why people are staying put. What do you think could motivate them to leave, if anything at all? Why would people stay if it so dangerous to do so?
6. Explain that, even when God took *B'nei Yisrael* out of Egypt, Midrash explains that a percentage of people chose to stay behind. When *B'nei Yisrael* traveled through the desert, they complained constantly about wanting to go back to Egypt. Why would they do that?
7. Show the line **לְשָׁנָה הַבָּא בִּירוּשָׁלָם** from the Haggadah. Ask what these words mean to learners. Some questions might include:
 - a. Do they really believe that they want to be in Israel next year?
 - b. Why do they say the words?
 - c. Why do they want to go? Why do they not want to go?
 - d. What could change that would make them change their minds?
8. Learners use a book making app or traditional art supplies to create a page of the Haggadah that is in line with what their own aspirations are. The page should include text and artwork to demonstrate their aspirations. Note that it is OK if learners keep the original **לְשָׁנָה הַבָּא בִּירוּשָׁלָם**.

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Differentiation Options

Knowing that learners learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners who need more assistance

- Instead of verbally describing their feelings about leaving Egypt, learners create a pictorial list or a word list naming the things they think *B'nei Yisrael* would miss when they left Egypt and all the things they think *B'nei Yisrael* imagine they will like about the Promised Land.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Learners explore the circumstances that led to the addition of the phrase “לְשָׁנָה הַבָּא בִּירוּשָׁלָם הַבָּנָוִיה” (Next year in [re]built Jerusalem) was added in modern times, particularly for people in Israel. What led to this extra addition?
- Learners create a marketing campaign around the phrase to convince people to travel Jerusalem to celebrate Passover..