

UNIT ONE - Abraham to the First Exile:
The Jewish People's Historical Connection to the Land of Israel (Part 1)



LESSON PLAN 5 From Egypt to Sinai: Moses, Nationhood and the Birth of Jewish Identity

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Students will trace the transformation of the Israelites from a family to a nation through the story of the Exodus.
- 2) Students will understand Moses' role as both a liberator and a lawgiver.
- 3) Students will analyze the spiritual and moral messages of the Exodus narrative.
- 4) Students will explore the concepts of Jewish national identity, leadership, and collective memory.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

[Sources 7-9](#)

Map of [Ancient Egypt](#) and the Sinai

ACTIVITIES:

1) Introduction and Warm-Up Activity (5 minutes)

Activity: "Tagline for a Movie"

Prompt:

"If the Exodus were a movie, what would its tagline be?"

Examples:

- "From Slavery to Sinai."
- "One Nation, Under God."
- "Let My People Go."

Have students write a 1-sentence tagline. Ask 2–3 students to share.

Use this to introduce the theme of transformation: *The Exodus is not just escape from slavery—it's the founding of a nation with a mission.*

2) Chavruta/Partner Text Study (10 minutes)

Instructions:

Students pair up to study Sources 7-9

Each pair discusses the following questions:

1. What does the story of the Exodus teach us about Jewish resilience and destiny?
2. How is the Jewish concept of nationhood different from that of other nations?
3. Why is Sinai seen as the spiritual foundation of Jewish identity?

Partners highlight relevant quotes and prepare one insight to share during class discussion.

3) Class Discussion and Analysis of Texts (7 minutes)

Facilitate whole-class discussion:

- How is Moses' leadership unique in world history?
- What does "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh" tell us about the nature of God and history?
- Why do we say that the Exodus is a moment not just of liberation, but of covenant and responsibility?

Illustrate key ideas on the board: Egypt = Power & Idolatry; Sinai = Ethics, Covenant, Identity.

4) Active Engagement Activity 1: (8 minutes)

Speed Dating Discussion: "Nationhood in the Desert"

Setup:

- 1) Create two concentric circles (inner and outer) for [paired conversations](#).
- 2) Students rotate every 2 minutes to a new partner.

Prompt Questions (1 per rotation):

1. Why is Mount Sinai considered the true birth of the Jewish people?
2. How does receiving the Torah in the desert (not in Israel) shape Jewish national identity?
3. Can a group of former slaves become a moral nation? Why or why not?
4. What makes the Jewish mission different from other nations?

5) Active Engagement Activity 2: (7 minutes)

Mini Debate: "Should Moses Have Been Allowed into the Land?"

Instructions: [Divide class into two teams](#):

- Team A argues that Moses should have been allowed to enter the Land of Israel.
- Team B argues that it was right for God to deny him entry.

Each team gets 3 minutes to prepare and 2 minutes to present arguments.

Wrap up with a 2-minute open floor for students to reflect on what the debate reveals about justice, leadership, and human fallibility.

6) Reflection and Teacher Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

Teacher Summary:

- a) Moses transforms from prince to shepherd to prophet.
- b) The Exodus is more than freedom—it's the birth of purpose.
- c) Sinai forges national identity rooted in Torah and moral responsibility.
- d) Even the greatest leaders are accountable to a higher standard.

"Two Truths and a Big Idea":

Instructions to Students:

On a half-sheet of paper or in your notebook, write the following:

Two truths – Two factual statements you learned from today's lesson (can be about Moses, the Exodus, Mount Sinai, or Jewish nationhood).

One big idea – One insight, theme, or lesson you think is central to the story of the Exodus and how it shaped Jewish identity.

Further Learning: UED videos and educational resources

1. [Moses and the Exodus](#)