

1

Sing Freedom!

EXODUS 15:1-21



GOAL

Children celebrate and sing the songs of freedom and gain understanding of God's desire for all people to know liberation and opportunity.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Liberating God, set me free from anxiety and give me the liberating joy that comes from knowing you. As I learn alongside these children, help me to have an open heart and extend your grace in each moment. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This session focuses on the ways we sing of freedom and liberation. Our songs are raised in a joyful mixture of relief (we know what might have happened had we been left to our own devices) and praise (we know what did happen because of God's liberating power in our lives). We will sing and dance with the Israelites at the edge of the Red Sea, and join our voices with others who have been liberated from oppression, even as we recognize that we ourselves have been set free through God's power in Jesus Christ.

THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible story depicts the celebratory song of the Israelites, led by Moses and Miriam, as they rejoice in God's liberation. They have been set free from slavery in Egypt and saved from certain death at the hands of the pursuing army. They recognize in their song that it is only through the power of God that they have been liberated. This session will connect the children with the Passover story, the Jewish song "Dayenu," and the songs of freedom sung by those enslaved in the United States.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Nearly every child has experienced the relief of knowing that what could have happened did not happen; and nearly every child has known the sweet feeling of freedom, at least from school, homework, chores, or other demands! Some children will be familiar with the American history of enslavement and oppression of African people. Some children may not be, and may find some stories distressing. Help them to see that the story of the Israelites and the stories in this country's history teach us that, even though people were doing something that was terribly wrong, God was working to liberate those who were suffering, and God is working even now to set people free.

SESSION PREPARATION

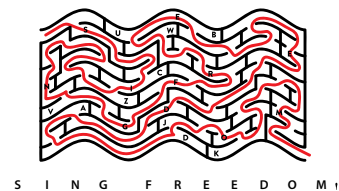
An internet-connected device is used throughout the session because listening to and singing songs about liberation is the key focus of the session.

Obtain the *Sing a New Song* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters, Year 2 Set) to use throughout the unit. It is a helpful resource for teaching children how to read a hymn, giving background on musical matters as well as questions regarding the text and context of hymns. A guide to styles and kinds of hymns is also provided.




GETTING STARTED

- Copies of Resource Page 1
- Crayons, markers, and/or colored pencils
- Internet-connected device



- Resource Page 2 (copies, optional)
- Internet-connected device (optional)

 Keep copies of Resource Page 2 for sessions 2, 3, and 4.

A PATH THROUGH THE SEA

A M C T

Greet the children as they arrive and provide them with copies of Resource Page 1 and crayons, markers, and/or colored pencils. Invite them to find the path through the sea for Moses, Miriam, and the Hebrew people they were leading. Encourage children to help one another as they need assistance. As they work, play the YouTube video “Let My People Go—Paul Robeson” (bit.ly/FMLetMyPeopleGo, 2:02).



Instead of playing the video, you could have a guest musician sing “When Israel Was in Egypt’s Land” (*Glory to God* hymnal, #52).

SINGING A NEW SONG!

M C

Teach the children the words to the first verse of “Sing a New Song” (BUNESSAN) on Resource Page 2 by saying a line at a time and having them repeat after you, or hand out copies and have the children follow along with you. Explain words and phrases:

- “Liberation” means freedom.
- “God is our savior” means that God helps us and saves us.
- “To our redeemer we all belong” means that we belong to God, the one who saves us.

Practice the lines several times and then sing the song to the familiar tune “Morning Has Broken,” either a cappella or with accompaniment using music from either bit.ly/FMBunessanTune (one verse) or the YouTube video “Giovanni Marradi—Morning Has Broken” (bit.ly/FMBunessanMusic, 3:39), stopping at :50 for one verse.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Internet-connected device

OH, FREEDOM!

M C T

Wonder together when may be times when people sing together to celebrate and remember. Some suggestions may be birthdays, Christmas, New Year’s Eve, worship, funerals, weddings, the national anthem at sports events, school songs, family gatherings, “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” during the seventh-inning stretch of a baseball game, and protests. Invite volunteers to sing any of the songs mentioned. Tell the children that they are going to learn a song from the United States, a song about freedom that was written sometime after 1865, the year when the Civil War ended. Explain that this war was fought to end slavery, to make sure that Black people in the United States would not be enslaved again. Comment that, many years later, people sang this song as they worked to make sure that Black people would have equal rights in our country. It can still be sung today.

Show the YouTube video “Oh Freedom!—The Golden Gospel Singers (Lyrics in Description)” (bit.ly/FMOhFreedom, 3:04). Ask the children what the

pictures showed in the video. Explain, if necessary, that they were of people and scenes from the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, a time when people marched and protested for fair treatment of Black people and to end racial discrimination. Reflect on the song, using the following questions:

- What feelings does this song give you?
- How might someone who was enslaved feel singing this song?
- Why do you think this song was sung a hundred years after the Civil War ended and slavery was abolished?
- Why might people sing this song today?

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

SINGING A SONG OF CELEBRATION

M AM C T

Open the Bible to Exodus 15:1–21 and tell the children that this passage is a song that was sung thousands of years ago, and it celebrates freedom. Explain that you will set the background of the reason for this song as you read an adapted Bible story. Ask the children to repeat “Let my people go!” after you say it in the story. Read Resource Page 3 aloud.

After the story, tell the children that the song you read is just a portion of the song the people sang. Reflect on the song with the following questions:

- Who was the song being sung to?
- What was being said to God?
- What you didn’t hear in the rest of the song was the people telling about what God had done to save them. Why do you think they sang about God’s deeds?

Show the YouTube video “Miriam’s Song by Debbie Friedman” (bit.ly/FMMiriamSong, 2:45) explaining that it is a song about Miriam and her victory song. Provide streamers and rhythm instruments, and invite the children to dance, wave their streamers, and play instruments as you play the song again.

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- Bible
 - Resource Page 3
 - Internet-connected device
 - Streamers
 - Rhythm instruments, such as tambourines and shakers

FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

WHAT DOES FREEDOM FEEL LIKE?

C A

Wonder together about what different experiences of freedom may be like using the following prompt: What do you think freedom was like for:

- the Hebrew people leaving Egypt?
- people in a country who have been ruled by another country?
- enslaved Africans and their descendants in America?
- a person being released from prison?

Invite the children to give suggestions of their own as well. Suggest that the examples you gave are pretty dramatic experiences of a lack of freedom and freedom, but that we all have experiences, perhaps in smaller ways, of feeling set free. Wonder together what some of those experiences may be.

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- Paper
 - Drawing and/or painting supplies

Suggestions might be a vacation break or the end of a school day, being able to go outside after a long period of bad weather, or the end of a time-out or being grounded.

Provide drawing and/or painting supplies and paper. Invite the children to draw or paint a picture depicting freedom. Suggest that they may want to think about their five senses and use them as a guide: What does freedom look like, sound like, smell like, taste like, and feel like? Invite the children to share their pictures with one another.

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- Internet-connected device
 - Rhythm instruments (optional)



Show the YouTube video “The Maccabeats—Dayenu—Passover” (bit.ly/FMMaccabeatsDayenu, 4:14, using the closed captioning for words in Hebrew and English) for an entertaining version of the song. The video begins with a boring Passover meal until the Maccabeats, an a cappella singing group, appears and sings the song in a variety of genres. Invite the children to sing along with the chorus.

DAYENU



Tell the children that they are going to hear a song that Jewish people sing when they celebrate the story of God’s saving the people from slavery in Egypt every year on the holiday called *Passover*. The song is called “Dayenu,” which means “enough” in Hebrew. The original song has fifteen verses and tells about all the ways God helped the people. Each verse has this format: If God had (something God did) and had not (something more God did), it would have been enough. For example: “If God had brought us out of Egypt and had not judged the Egyptians, that would have been enough.” Each verse ends with *dayenu*, enough, because every single thing God did would have been enough, but God did more and more until the people were free!

Show the YouTube video “Dayenu: Learn the Words to the Passover Seder Song” (bit.ly/FMDayenuLearn, 2:58) and invite the children to sing along, especially with the chorus. Provide rhythm instruments and invite the children to play instruments, move to the music, and sing the chorus as you play the video again.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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- Internet-connected device
 - Plain paper
 - Crayons, markers, colored pencils

A SONG OF LIBERATION



Tell the children that the song “Lift Every Voice and Sing” was written in 1900, just thirty-five years after the end of the Civil War to end slavery in this country. James Weldon Johnson, a school principal, wrote the song for an assembly to celebrate the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. James’s brother, John Rosamund Johnson, wrote the music. It was sung by five hundred school children in a segregated school in Jacksonville, Florida. Explain that, at that time, schools were segregated, meaning that this was a school for Black children only. Johnson wrote the song to lift up Lincoln’s hope of freedom for all people. The second verse remembers the struggle and suffering of the enslaved peoples, and the third verse is about courage and faith in God. Read aloud the words to the first verse of the song:

Lift every voice and sing till earth and heaven ring,
ring with the harmonies of liberty.
Let our rejoicing rise high as the listening skies;
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;
sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
let us march on, till victory is won.

Show the YouTube video “3 Young Kings Sing Lift Every Voice and Sing” (bit.ly/FMLiftEveryVoice, 2:30). Then choose one of the following two options to encourage the children to reflect on this song and its message of freedom.

- **Art:** Provide paper and drawing supplies. Invite the children to listen to the song as you play it again and draw a picture or write words that are their own song of freedom.
- **Music:** This song has lots of words and images that could recall other songs: liberty, rejoicing, and faith. At the end of the song, as the children are introduced, the words “Sing a song . . . of joy . . . justice . . . hope” are written on the screen. Invite the children to think of songs they know that are about or echo these themes. Suggest that they sing or say the words, or look up the song(s) on YouTube (www.youtube.com) and play part of the song(s) for the children to hear.

THANK-YOU SONG



Invite the children to write their own song of liberation, thanking God for all that God has done for them. Have the children work in small groups, on their own, or as one group. Provide copies of Resource Page 4 and invite the children to complete the prompts. Have the children share their verses. Try singing the song with everyone’s verses (sung to the tune of “Frère Jacques”).

- Copies of Resource Page 4
- Markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils



Play the YouTube video “Frère Jacques (Instrumental)—Cartoon-Free, Distraction-Free” (bit.ly/FMFresesInstrumental, 1:15) if you would like to sing along with music.



FOLLOWING JESUS

Gather the children in a circle. Tell the children that your closing time is going to be a prayer, and they will respond by saying either “Lord, hear our prayer” when you hold your arms out, palms up, or “Thanks be to God,” when you place your palms together as in prayer.

God, we thank you for liberation from all that holds us captive. (*hold arms out, palms up*)

Thanks be to God!

God, we pray together today for all who are not free. Let your love liberate them. (*place palms together*)

Lord, hear our prayer.

Thank you, God, for Jesus, who sets us free with truth and love. (*hold arms out, palms up*)

Thanks be to God!

God, help us to help others, to love others, to forgive others. (*place palms together*)

Lord, hear our prayer.

We are grateful for all that you have done for us, Mighty God! (*hold arms out, palms up*)

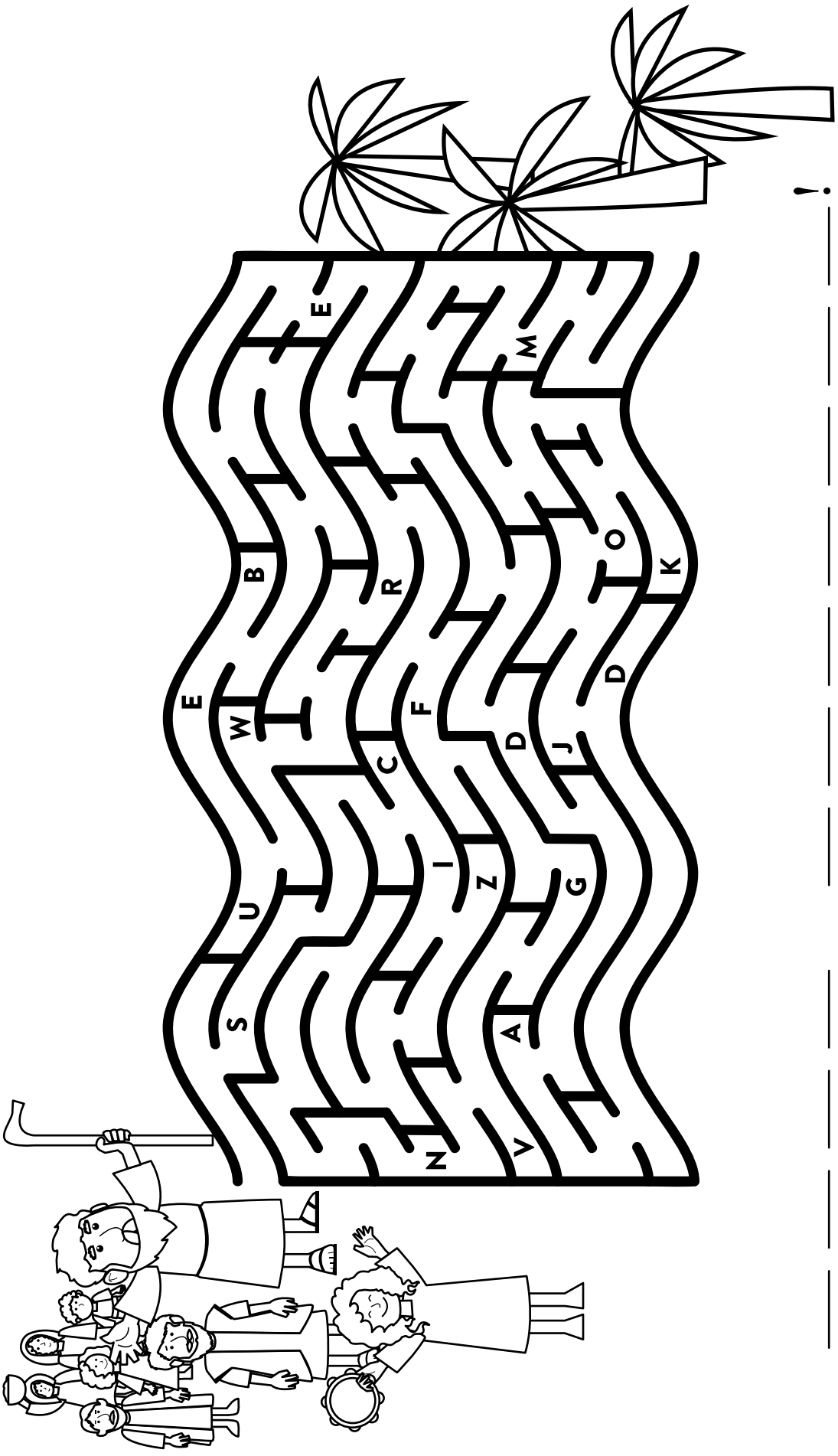
Thanks be to God!

Make us courageous and kind as we strive to work for justice and peace. (*place palms together*)

Lord, hear our prayer.

Amen.

Help Moses and Miriam lead the Hebrew people out of slavery and to freedom! Find the letters along their journey through the Red Sea to see what they will do when they reach the other side. Write the letters in the blanks below the maze.

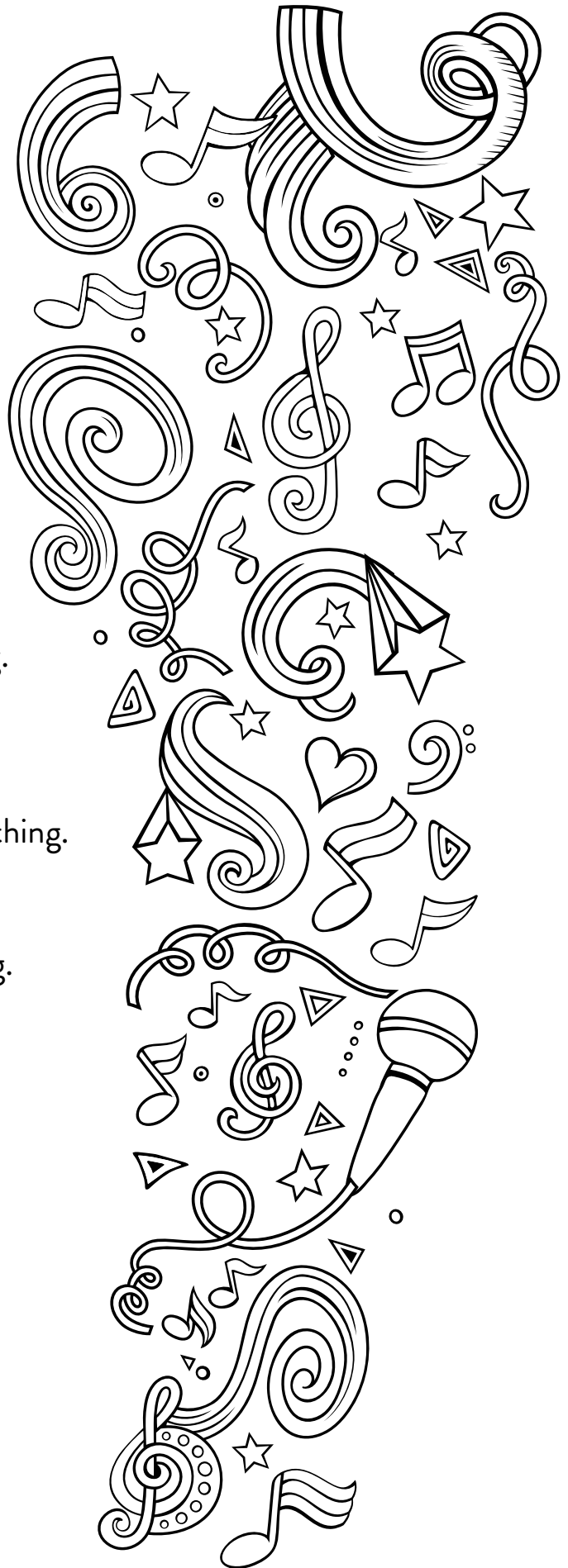


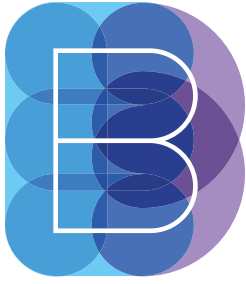
Sing a New Song

Tune: BUNESSAN (“Morning Has Broken”)

Lyrics: © 2022 David Gambrell

1. Sing liberation! God is our savior.
To our redeemer we all belong.
Blessing and honor, glory and power.
God is our savior! Sing a new song.
2. Sing tribulation! God will deliver.
Cry out in sorrow; name what is wrong.
Blessing and honor, glory and power.
God will deliver! Sing a new song.
3. Sing transformation! God does a new thing.
Lift up the lowly, humble the strong.
Blessing and honor, glory and power.
God does a new thing! Sing a new song.
4. Sing new creation! God reigns forever.
We have been hoping, praying so long.
Blessing and honor, glory and power.
God reigns forever! Sing a new song.





BIBLE STORY

BASED ON EXODUS 15:1–21

God told Moses that the cries of God’s people had been heard. God instructed Moses to lead them out of slavery in Egypt where they were slaves, doing hard work for no pay and never free to worship God. So God told Moses to go to the ruler of Egypt, the pharaoh, and say, “Let my people GO!”

But the pharaoh did not want to let them go, so he said, “No!”

God sent plagues on the Egyptians. First there was water turning to blood.

Moses went to the pharaoh and said, “Let my people GO!”

But the pharaoh said, “No!”

Then there were frogs everywhere!

Moses went to the pharaoh and said, “Let my people GO!”

But the pharaoh said, “No!”

Then there were lice, and flies, and all the livestock got sick!

Every time, Moses went to the pharaoh and said, “Let my people GO!”

But the pharaoh said, “No!”

Then there were boils, then hail, then locusts, and then darkness!

Every time, Moses went to the pharaoh and said, “Let my people GO!”

But the pharaoh said, “No!”

At last, there was death of the firstborn in every family.

Moses went to the pharaoh and said, “Let my people GO!”

And this time the pharaoh said, “GO!”

So they took everything they could carry and they ran. They RAN!

Meanwhile, the pharaoh changed his mind and sent his mighty army after them! But the people ran until they reached the edge of the Red Sea. Trapped!

God parted the waters. Moses and his sister Miriam led the Hebrew people on dry ground through the sea. When the pharaoh’s horses and chariots and soldiers tried to follow, the waters came back and washed over the top of them. The Hebrew people were safe, and they were free! So they sang this song:

God has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider
have been thrown into the sea.

God is our strength and might, God is our
salvation;

This is our God, and we will praise God!

This is our ancestors’ God and we will shout
God’s name! . . .

Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in splendor, doing wonders?

In your steadfast love you led the people
whom you redeemed;

you guided them by your strength . . .

Our God will reign forever and ever.”

Then the prophet Miriam took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them:

Sing to the LORD, for God has triumphed
gloriously;

horse and rider have been thrown into the
sea.

Song of Praise

(sung to the tune "Frère Jacques")



God, we thank you.

God, we praise you.

You are _____
(one-syllable word)

You are _____
(one-syllable word)

Thank you for our _____
(two-syllable word or two one-syllable words)

Thank you for our _____
(two-syllable word or two one-syllable words)

You are great!

Thank you, God.

