

THE JOURNEY

From Egypt to the Promised Land: Their Journey is Our Journey

1. Recount

Ask your kids to tell you the story that we enacted at today's event. Listen to their version and their impressions.

2. Ask Questions

Ask what they think about everything they've seen and done today. Why did each person behave as they did? What did they think about these stories? What does this tell them about God? What does it tell them about human beings, and how we behave with one another and with God?

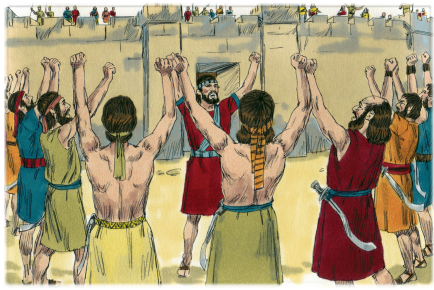
3. Help Interpret

The Scriptures are not just historical information; these stories are meant to help us understand our own lives, and our own journey. How can we see ourselves in the Israelites? How is our journey like their journey? Does God love us like He loved them? How can the Israelites help us explore and enlarge our own relationship with God?



What Comes Next?

Now that we have brought our children to the Church, how do we reinforce what they've learned when we get home? Ultimately, what we do and say in the home is so much more important in the formation of our children than anything that could be accomplished at a quick parish family event or in a Sunday School classroom. Just asking questions on the ride home — what did you learn today? — invites conversation and creates space in the family for talking about God. If we truly wish to raise Christian children whose faith takes root deep in their hearts, let's keep the conversation alive all the time. Let's watch to see God at work in our lives, to see the wisdom of the Scriptures in our everyday circumstances, and to actively engage in the life of the Church, even on an ordinary day with a busy schedule. We can begin by engaging the story of the Israelites together — how is this story every much about us as it is about them? What can we take away from tonight, to enrich and inform our everyday lives?



Themes in the Biblical Stories

The events we re-enacted came from the books of Exodus and Joshua, in the Old Testament.

- **Egypt**, where the Israelites were held in bondage, is generally symbolic for any state of lawlessness and sin. We are in bondage in Egypt when we've gone away from God and are subject to other passions (the 'false gods' of vanity and materialistic greed, of status or fame, of addiction and the like.)
- We take a similar **journey** when we travel from our own Egypts of our selfishness or sinfulness, to the Promised Land, working all along the way to bring ourselves under God's reign in His Promised Kingdom.
- The **Burning Bush** is like the Holy Theotokos: just as she had Christ inside her but remained Virgin, the bush contains the fire of God but is not consumed.
- The Israelites were **ungrateful**. We too sometimes forget all the good things God has done for us. We can see ourselves in this and learn from it.

The Journey We Took

Together, we imagined ourselves to be the Israelite people, held in slavery in Egypt; our slave masters forced us to work.

Seeing the misery of His people, God came to Moses in the Burning Bush, and told him to go to His people and to Pharaoh, for Moses would lead them out of Egypt. When Moses asked what name he should tell the people, God told him His name, saying, "I AM WHO I AM." *I am* is a name for God, meaning "The Existing One". So Moses told God's people.

Though Moses warned Pharaoh of what was to come, Pharaoh refused to let God's people go — even through various plagues, including the Nile River turning to blood, frogs, hail, locusts and even death itself. Pharaoh finally agreed to let them go, and then changed his mind and chased them anyway! But God took care of His people, leading them with a cloud by day and a fire by night, and then parting the Red Sea for them. On the other side of the sea, in the desert, He sent them miraculous food and drink, and yet, the people complained! They would quickly forget all that God did for them, and fall back into ingratitude as they wandered in the desert.

Finally, after a long journey (and the Fathers tell us, it could have been a short journey, but the Israelites' complaining and disobedience caused them to get lost for forty years!), God's people came to the Promised Land. Joshua led them in the fight for Jericho — but this was no ordinary fight. They circled the city with priests, with the Ark of the Covenant, and with trumpets — once a day for six days, and then seven times on the seventh day, and the walls tumbled down. (When we are baptized, when we marry, we circle a table three times — does this remind you of Jericho? Are we claiming something for God, just as the Israelites claimed that city for God?)

Why not fight a regular battle?

At the Red Sea and at Jericho, God grants victories that are conspicuously miraculous. No one could think that this was a normal war, won by human strength, but everyone can see that this is truly God at work in His Glory. This is one of the many ways that God reaches out to His creation.