



ACTIVITY

Nachshon and Crossing the Red Sea

Materials Needed

- Exodus 14:10-15
- Copies of the Midrash
- Clip by G-dcast (www.g-dcast.com/nachshon)
- Internet connection and screening device

Time Needed

30-45 minutes

Goal

To “get inside” the Exodus story and understand what motivates and hinders us from taking the initiative to help other Jewish people in need.

Before You Get Started

Look at the list of enduring understandings. Which one would you like to emphasize through this activity?

- Jewish tradition created a society where the members of the Jewish People have a responsibility to each other as joint participants in a collective.
- Judaism outlines ‘*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh*’ as an imperative. The word “*kol*” emphasizes that it is an obligation for each and every person.
- Jewish communities have always organized themselves according to this principle, building structures for mutual support of those in need.
- In the late 20th century there are numerous examples of when Jews mobilized in support of their brethren around the world based on this principle.

Directions for Activity

1. Ask participants to think about a time when they “put themselves out there” to help someone in need especially when it wasn’t the popular thing to do.
2. Introduce them to the character from the Exodus story, Nachshon Ben Aminadav who, the Midrash relates, helped save the Israelites from the Pharaoh’s advancing army by taking the first steps into the Red Sea and through his actions encouraged the rest of the Israelites to follow. For context read what Chabad has to say on the topic (www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/2199147/jewish/Meet-Nachshon-ben-Aminadav.htm).
3. Now watch the clip (www.g-dcast.com/nachshon/)
4. Conduct a short “Bibliodrama” session in which you “get inside” the story of the Midrash. For more background on Bibliodrama read this (www.bibliodrama.com/what-is-bibliodrama/).
5. Begin the bibliodrama by reading the text from the Midrash:

Rabbi Judah says: ‘When the Israelites stood at the sea one said: ‘I don’t want to go down to the sea first.’ Another said: ‘I don’t want to go down first either.’ While they were standing there, and while Moses was praying to God to save them, Nachshon the son of Aminadav jumped up, went down and fell into the waves.’” Talmud (Bavli, Sota 36a), Mechilta (Parashat B’shalach)

6. Choose different points to stop at and ask questions of your participants. For example, after reading the first line, turn to someone and say ‘Israelite – why don’t you want to go to the sea, what are you afraid of? Don’t you believe God will protect you?’ Read a bit more and turn to someone else and say “Moses, tell me what you are arguing with God about?” You can even turn to someone and ask them to give voice to the waves or another inanimate object in the story, “Waves – what did you think of this Nachshon character?” or “Did you feel the other waves tremble around you or did you think it was just another day at the beach?” Have fun with it!
7. For a more expanded activity, apply the same methodology and start with the story from Exodus 14:10-15 and then read the Midrash. (Note: the story of Nachshon does not appear in the Torah, but is added later to fill in the story by the Rabbis who authored the Midrash.)
8. Sum up the discussion and ask participants to share a question or idea they are left with.

Note to Educator

Did the enduring understanding that you set out to teach surface during this activity?