

## Interviews with Bible Characters

### Simon of Cyrene

The following lesson is about the man who was pressed into service by the Roman soldiers to carry the cross of Jesus when he was physically not able to do so. This lesson is done in a question and answer format with the Bible character selected for this lesson.

Scripture: Mark 15:21 New International Version (NIV)

*<sup>21</sup> A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.*

Questions?

1. Where are you from? Answer: Cyrene, which is a city in Libya on the Mediterranean Sea.
2. Why did you come to Jerusalem? Answer: For the Passover.
3. What is the Passover? Answer: Passover, or Pesach in Hebrew, is one of the Jewish religion's most sacred and widely observed holidays. It takes place every April and lasts approximately one week. In Judaism, Passover commemorates the story of the Israelites' departure from ancient Egypt, which appears in the Hebrew Bible's books of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, among other texts. Jews observe the weeklong festival with a number of important rituals, including a traditional Passover meal known as a seder, the removal of leavened products from their home, the substitution of matzo for bread and the retelling of the exodus tale.
4. What is the Exodus tale? Answer: Jews were slaves in Egypt. Moses, the deliverer from God, asked Pharaoh to let the Jews return to the Promised land in Canaan. When the pharaoh refuses, God unleashes 10 plagues on the Egyptians, including turning the Nile River red with blood, diseased livestock, boils, hailstorms and three days of darkness, culminating in the slaying of every firstborn son by an avenging angel.

The Israelites, however, are told to mark the doorframes of their homes with lamb's blood so that the angel of death will recognize and "pass over" each Jewish household. So, the Passover is celebrated because Pharaoh let them go after this took place.

5. Why are you carrying the cross? Answer: This innocent man whom many know is the Messiah has been beaten and flogged by the Romans and he has lost all his strength. He cannot carry the cross any longer up to the top of the hill, so they made me carry it for him. He is to be crucified.

6. Well, I will let you continue your service for God.

Next Steps: Read the story of the Passover in Exodus chapter 12 with your parents. This will give you background on what was happening in Jerusalem at this time when Jesus was crucified.