

# שְׁמוֹת

## The Story of Passover A Quick Reference Sheet

The holiday of Passover is recalled in the Book of *Shemot*, Book of Exodus. The Israelites had come down to Egypt from Canaan, in search of food. Pharaoh invited the patriarch Jacob and his entire family of 70 people to live in Egypt. Years passed and a new Pharaoh came to power. He did not remember the good relationship shared by the Israelites and the Egyptians. He was afraid that the Israelites would grow so numerable that they would take over Egypt. The Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites and ordered all male children to be killed upon birth.

Yocheved, an Israelite mother, and two midwives, Shifra and Puah, refused to follow the Pharaoh's orders. Yocheved gave birth to a baby boy and hid him from the authorities. When she could no longer hide him, she set him afloat on the Nile River. The daughter of Pharaoh saw the basket and rescued the child. She named him Moses.

When Moses was an adult, he killed an Egyptian slave-master who was beating an Israelite slave. In fear for his life, he ran away from Egypt. He married Zipporah and became a shepherd. One day, he saw a bush on fire but it was not being destroyed by the fire. God spoke to him through this bush and told him to free the Israelites from slavery.

Moses speaks to Pharaoh and demands the release of the enslaved nation. Pharaoh refuses to free the people and therefore God sends plagues to the land of Egypt. After the 10<sup>th</sup> plague, Pharaoh releases the slaves.

Moses leads the people out of Egypt. When they reached the Red Sea, they saw Pharaoh's army approaching them. They were going to force the Israelites back into slavery. With the Sea in front of them and the Egyptian army behind them, the Israelites were trapped. God split open the Sea and the Israelites passed through safely. When they were safe across the riverbank, the Sea returned to normal and drowned the Egyptian army trying to cross the Sea.

Moses leads the people to the land of Canaan - later to be called Israel. It takes the people 40 years to cross the desert between Egypt and Israel. In that time, Moses gives the people the Ten Commandments and the Books of the Torah. In the Torah, we learn many of the laws and customs of observing Passover, such as eating matza as a way of remembering the bread that did not have time to rise before the Israelites fled Egypt.