



THE LONGEST NIGHT

Written by Laurel Snyder

Illustrated by Catia Chien

At Passover, we are instructed to experience the holiday as if we ourselves were slaves being freed from bondage. The poetic imagining of the exodus story in this book gives us a child's glimpse into the lives of the Israelites at that time. We witness the plagues' effects on all of Egypt and recognize the power of family to help us navigate difficult times.

Pirkei Avot, a book of rabbinic teachings sometimes translated as Ethics of Our Ancestors, tells us: "Do not be scornful of anyone or anything, for you have no person without his hour and nothing without its place." We know the tables turn on the Egyptians whose Pharaoh mistreated the Hebrews; everyone and everything is affected -- from people to animals and the land itself. Here is an opportunity to consider the ripple effect of all our actions. We never know what might result from a single deed.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN READING:

- Who is telling the story in this book?
- What do you think the child slave was feeling as the plagues escalated?
- Can you remember a time when you were frightened or excited, as the slaves were during their escape from Egypt?
- How many emotions conveyed in this book can you name?

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

"The Song of the Sea" is the first poem in the Bible. In this poem/song, which begins in Exodus, chapter 15, verse 1, the Israelites have crossed the Red Sea, and Moses tells the emotional story of slavery and freedom. What important family stories can you tell? Could you tell them in rhyme or song?

Music is often called the universal language, and musical instruments play an important role in many celebrations. Moses' sister Miriam added to the joy of freedom when she picked up a timbrel (a small drum or tambourine) and led the Hebrew people in dance. You don't have to play the guitar or piano - express yourself with rhythm! Enhance your next holiday or Shabbat meal with music made with pencils, spoons, keys, or any household item you like.

The Longest Night shows us that life changes and always holds the promise of a new day. When life feels challenging, take a family walk and reflect on the many blessings of your lives.