



EXODUS

Written & Illustrated by Brian Wildsmith

The story of Exodus – when Moses led the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt and across the Red Sea, against all odds – is one of the richest, most compelling stories in the Bible, and this version has rich, compelling illustrations to match. Settle in for a story that's stood the tests of time.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

With its dramatic language and vivid illustrations, *Exodus* is no ordinary children's book. From the newborn baby hidden near the water's edge, to the spectacular pillars of flame and clouds that guide the Hebrew people to the sea, the story of Moses and the Israelites' exodus sets the stage for an astonishing event. The rain of delicious food from above, the theatrical parting of the Red Sea, and the enchantment of the burning bush all remove this story from ordinary life and transport us to the realm of the remarkable. And what could be more remarkable than a set of laws that govern all human meaning and action?

Because there is explicit suffering and death in the Passover narrative, this is not an easy story to tell. Yet its theatricality is crucial. The suspense, repetition, and plot twists define the story. They emphasize the tension of the departure from Egypt, and underscore the importance of the gift of the Ten Commandments to Moses and his people.

Many customs and rituals of the Passover *seder* reflect the drama of this story. The song "Dayenu" includes 15 exuberant verses, and when we sing them at the seder table, we reflect the same suspense, repetition, plot twists, and gratitude that make the Passover story central to Jewish life. Seder participants also recite the names of each of the ten plagues meant to persuade Pharaoh to release the Hebrews from bondage. When naming these terrible plagues, we deliberately spill drops of wine (or grape juice) to acknowledge that all joy is diminished when any person suffers.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

The author/illustrator of *Exodus* grew up in an English coal mining village, about which he wrote: "Everything was grey. There wasn't any colour. It was all up to my imagination." Just as Brian Wildsmith used vibrant art to bring his surroundings in line with his internal world, his marvelous drawings can help us relate to the details of the exodus narrative. You might explore this story by asking questions like:

- Why do the birds and insects look so big when Moses is hidden in the water?
- What do the pictures tell us about what life was like for slaves in Egypt?
- Do you think the drawings of the plagues are realistic? Do they go with the rest of the story?
- What is a pillar of cloud or flame? How would you draw these ideas?
- How do you think you might feel if you were living in the desert with Moses?
- What are the different ways that gold is used in this book?
- One item in the story is described as gold, but no gold is used in the drawing. Why do you think the "golden calf" is drawn without any gold?
- What can you tell from looking only at the sky throughout the book?
- Why are the Ten Commandments printed inside both the front and the back covers?