

The Story of Passover

written by
David A. Adler

illustrated by
Jill Weber

{ Why is it important to remember the past? }

A Tale for the Ages

The story of Passover is not just a story. It's a collective remembrance of the Jewish people, passed down for generations. The tale itself starts with an act of forgetting: The new pharaoh of Egypt has forgotten about the history of Joseph and the Israelites in his country, and now he sees them as outsiders. This act of forgetting sets in motion a terrible saga of slavery. Reading the story reinforces a key teaching of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible): Treat the stranger fairly, because you were once slaves in Egypt. To learn more visit pjlibrary.org/storyofpassover.

Plot Twists

The story of Passover has many twists and turns. The first important turning point takes place before Moses is born, when Pharaoh's astrologers tell him a Hebrew boy will eventually lead the slaves out of Egypt. This results in Pharaoh's darkest law — and Miriam's plot to save her brother. When Moses grows up, he sees a taskmaster beating a slave. Not only does Moses feel moral outrage, he also feels a new connection with his people. After he runs away, Moses encounters the burning bush. If he hadn't been paying attention, he might not have noticed that the bush was not being consumed by the flames. When Moses tunes in, God speaks to him — ushering in another turning point. Passover highlights both spiritual attention and connection with our community.

Spill the Wine

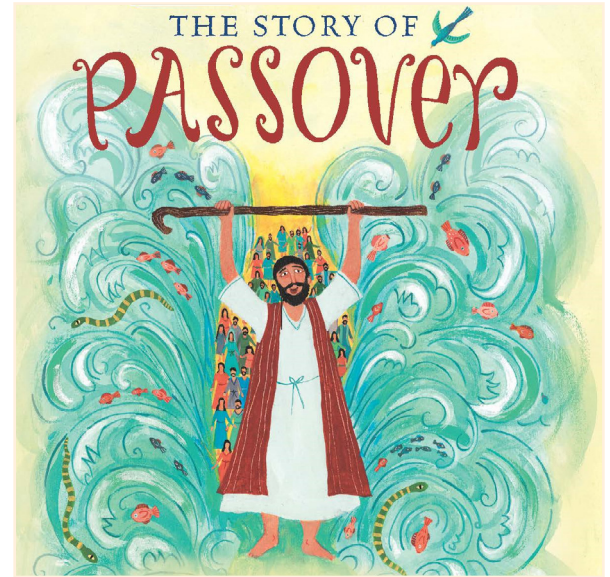
Most interesting stories are complicated, and this one is no exception. Just as the Israelites celebrate their greatest moment of triumph — crossing the Red Sea — the Egyptians are suffering a great loss, as Egyptian troops are drowned. During the seder (the ritual meal), we are asked to acknowledge this complicated climax by spilling a little wine in memory of the Egyptians who died as the Israelites went free. We dip our pinkies into our wine glasses and then leave drops on our plates (try not to get wine on the tablecloth!). We don't lick our fingers, because we don't want to seem like we're gloating. Some say these drops are like tiny tears.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

During Passover we are asked to imagine we ourselves are Israelite slaves. What do you think that would be like?

If you were an Israelite slave, what would you miss most about being free?

When the Israelites were getting ready to leave Egypt, they probably felt rushed, nervous, and excited. When have you felt that way?



HANDS ON!

Make Your Own Plague Props



At Passover, we're asked to imagine that we personally are experiencing what the Israelites went through. One way to bring the story alive is to use props. You can buy a ready-made "plague kit" online, or pull together items around the house to represent the plagues. These ideas are inspired by the Bible Belt Balabusta (biblebeltbalabusta.com), but feel free to come up with your own.

1. Blood: red craft paper
2. Frogs: plastic or stuffed frog toys
3. Lice: plastic bugs
4. Wild beasts: stuffed lion, tiger, or bear
5. Cattle disease: toy cow (put a bandage on it!)
6. Boils: red dot stickers
7. Hail: tennis balls
8. Locusts: more plastic bugs
9. Darkness: sunglasses or sleep masks
10. Slaying of the firstborn: poison (skull and crossbones) symbol