



What Is *Passover*?

Egyptian army tried to cross through the waters, the sea swallowed them all.

When the Israelites realized they were finally safe, they sang a song of praise and thanksgiving to their amazing, mighty God who heard their cries and rescued them from slavery.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why were the Israelites scared when they got to the Red Sea? What miracle did God perform to save them? How did the Israelites respond to this miracle? How can we respond when God does something for us?

REMEMBER THIS DAY

Ever since that time, Jewish people throughout history have remembered this day when God rescued them from Egypt. They call this holiday *Passover* because death passed over the homes of God's people.

In the Bible, God told the Israelites to have a special meal to remember what He did for them at *Passover*. This meal is called the *Seder*, and Jewish people all over the world celebrate *Passover* in this way. During this meal, Jews eat a special bread called *matzah*, say blessings, and retell the story of leaving Egypt.

Children have a key role at the *Seder* meal. They ask four key questions that help everyone at the table discuss the



importance of this celebration. For Christians, many traditions, such as certain parts of communion or the Lord's Supper, come from the *Passover* celebration. In fact, it was during the *Passover* celebration with his disciples that Jesus told them about his approaching death. Jesus said in Luke 22:15, "I have eagerly desired to eat this *Passover* with you before I suffer."

Christians identify Jesus as the *Passover* lamb—as the sacrifice against death. John the Baptist, when he first saw Jesus, said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," (John 1:29). Just like the Israelites were rescued, Christians believe Jesus rescues them from their sins.

Both Jews and Christians know from the wonderful stories of *Passover* and Easter that God sees when we are in trouble, and that He saves us because of His great love for us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why do the Jews celebrate Passover? Why is it important for them to remember what God did? Can you remember something God has done for you? What can you do to help remember His love and care for you?

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THE STORY BEGINS

The story of *Passover* begins with a boy named Joseph who lived in Israel with his eleven brothers. Now, Joseph was their father's favourite son, and he gave Joseph a beautiful coat of many colours as a gift. This made his brothers very mad and very jealous.

To make matters worse, Joseph told his brothers about amazing dreams in which he was very powerful and his brothers bowed down to him. This made the brothers even more mad and jealous! In fact, they were so jealous that they sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt.

Although Joseph worked very hard for his new master in Egypt, the master's wife accused him of a crime that Joseph didn't do. So Joseph was thrown into jail, where he stayed for many years. While Joseph was in jail,

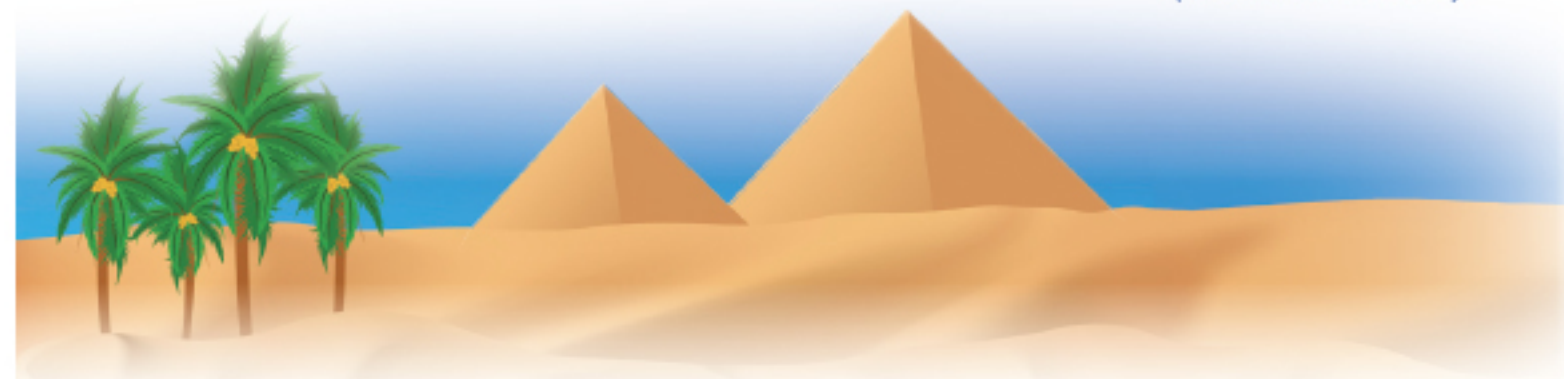
the king of Egypt, called Pharaoh, had some crazy dreams that he did not understand. Because Joseph was known as someone who could explain dreams, Pharaoh called Joseph out of jail.

Joseph explained to Pharaoh that his dreams were a warning from God that Egypt would soon have a drought, which meant no rain and no food!

Joseph suggested that the king plan now and store food for the difficult years ahead. Pharaoh liked Joseph's plan, so he put Joseph in charge. Now Joseph was second in command over all Egypt!

The land where Joseph's family lived was also struck by the drought and they had no food. So Joseph's father sent his eleven sons to Egypt to get food. There they bowed before Joseph, begging for food.

It had been so long since they last saw Joseph, they didn't recognize him!
(Continued inside)





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When Joseph told them who he was, they were very afraid that Joseph was still angry with them for what they did. But Joseph forgave them, and his whole family moved down to Egypt to be with him.

Joseph's family settled in Egypt, then lived there for many years in peace and happiness.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Has one of your brothers or sisters—or someone else—ever done something mean to you? How did you respond? How did Joseph respond when his brothers did something mean to him? How did God act in this bad situation to bring about something good?

TROUBLE STARTS

The Israelites continued to live and grow in Egypt for many years after Joseph and his family had died. By this time, there was a new Pharaoh. He didn't know anything about Joseph and the Israelites. What he did know was that there were too many of them in his country. He was afraid that they might try to take it over. So the



Pharaoh made the Israelites slaves. Life became very hard for all of the Israelites. The Egyptians made them work for very long days—and they would not let them

God heard their cries and chose a man named Moses to lead them out of Egypt.

But Moses was afraid. He didn't think he could do this big job. God reassured Moses that He would tell him what to say and that He would give Moses the power to perform miracles so that Pharaoh



would know he was speaking for God.

Still Moses was afraid. So God let Moses' brother, Aaron, help him. Finally, Moses agreed to go.

When Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh to ask him to release the Israelites, Pharaoh refused. He became angry and made life more difficult for the Israelites, forcing them to work even harder.

So God allowed Moses and Aaron to perform miracles to prove to Pharaoh that God was with them and the Israelites. But each time, Pharaoh's magicians were able to perform the same miracles, so Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go.

Because Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses, God sent terrible plagues, or disasters, upon Egypt. First, God turned the Nile River from water into blood.

Next, God sent thousands of frogs, then gnats, then flies to Egypt. After that, all the animals got sick. Then all the people's skin was covered in sores. Next God brought a big hailstorm. After that, God brought thousands of locusts to Egypt, and they ate up all the crops and food. Then God made it dark in Egypt for three whole days.

After each disaster, Moses went

back to Pharaoh and asked him to let God's people—the Israelites—go. But each time Pharaoh refused.

TALK ABOUT IT:

When God called Moses to help lead the Israelites out of slavery, how did Moses respond? When Moses responded this way, what did God do? What do we learn about God from this situation?

FREE AT LAST

Because Pharaoh was such a stubborn man and would not let the Israelites leave Egypt, God planned a final disaster. One last time Moses went to Pharaoh and told him if he did not let God's people go, all the firstborn sons in every home in Egypt would die.

To protect the Israelites, God told each family to sacrifice a lamb to eat and then



to put some of its blood around the doorframe of their home. When the plague of death

came that night, it would pass over every home with blood on its doorframe. Pharaoh again refused, and that night the plague of death struck every household in Egypt, including Pharaoh's palace. Loud wailing was heard all throughout the land, and Pharaoh finally

said to Moses, "Leave us. Go away all of you! Go and worship your God as you wanted."

All the Israelites quickly gathered what they owned and prepared to leave Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children followed as God led the way with a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. They followed God into the desert, until they reached the Red Sea.



Once the Israelites had left, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army to chase after them. When the Israelites saw the approaching army with their chariots, they became frightened.

What were they to do? They were caught with the sea on one side and the angry Egyptian army on the other.

God commanded Moses to stretch his hand over the sea. When he did, a great wind blew over the waters and turned it into dry land. The sea was split in two! The Israelites walked through the sea with a wall of water on each side of them. But when the

(Continued on back page)

