THE MAGGID

The Story of the Exodus from Egypt

Adapted by Alice Jacobson

Illustrations by Nina Taus

Produced by the CJL Creativity Center

Coalition for Jewish Learning

Education Program of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation

© 1985

The Children of Israel had come to live in Egypt when Joseph, their brother, was Prime Minister. They had come, seventy people in all, and settled in the city of Goshen. There they lived and worked as free people. They had many children and became a large nation. They were happy in Egypt.

A new Pharaoh came to rule over Egypt. He was frightened of the Children of Israel. He thought that perhaps they would go to war against Egypt. He issued a cruel decree. All their newborn sons would be killed. All the Hebrews were to become slaves.

For many years, the Children of Israel were slaves to Pharaoh. The taskmasters were cruel and forced them to work harder and harder. They were building the great pyramid storehouses of Pithom and Ramses. As they worked in the hot sun, they remembered a better time, before they had become slaves.

At this time, a son was born to a Hebrew by the name of Yocheved. She did not kill her son. Her daughter Miriam was to set the child afloat in a basket on the River Nile. She was to watch over it and make sure it was safe. The basket was found by Pharaoh's daughter, who took the child home and adopted him as her own son. She called the child Moses.

As Moses grew up, he saw the suffering of the Hebrews. It made him angry. Once, Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. He killed the Egyptian and ran away.

Moses became a shepherd in the land of Midian. There, while tending his sheep, he came across a bush. It was burning, but it did not turn to ash. From the bush Moses heard the voice of God. It told him to go to Pharaoh and tell him that the God of the Hebrews said to free His people from slavery.

Many times, Moses went to Pharaoh. Always, Pharaoh agreed to let the Children of Israel leave. Always, he went back on his word. Many plagues were brought upon the Egyptians -- blood, wild animals, hailstones. With each plague, Pharaoh said the Hebrews could leave. When the plague was gone, he changed his mind again.

Finally, Moses told Pharaoh that if he did not let the Hebrews go, a tenth plague would be brought on the Egyptians. All the firstborn sons would be killed. Pharaoh was frightened. He was the eldest in his family. He told Moses to take his people and leave the land of Egypt.

Moses told the Children of Israel to prepare themselves. They were to sacrifice a lamb, and paint some of its blood on the doorposts of their homes. The Angel of Death was to come and kill all firstborn Egyptians. He would pass over the homes whose doorposts were painted with blood. They did as Moses said.

Quickly they prepared bread for the journey. But before the bread had time to rise, they were already on their way. When he saw them leaving, Pharaoh once again changed his mind.

The large nation of slaves followed Moses. They walked until they reached the Red Sea. There, Moses took his rod and touched it to the water. A great miracle happened. The water spread apart so that the Children of Israel could pass on dry land. As the Egyptians came up behind, Moses once again touched the water with his rod.

The waters returned, and the Egyptians and their chariots were drowned in the sea. The Children of Israel sang songs of joy. They were free once again.

for painting

the blood