**The Story of Moses**

A long time ago there was a cruel Pharaoh. He turned the Hebrews into his slaves. Then he became afraid that the Hebrews would rise up against him. So he ordered that all newborn Hebrew boys were to be thrown into the Nile River.

One day a Hebrew woman called Yocheved had a child, a strong and beautiful boy. She was able to keep him hidden for three months. But Yocheved feared that Pharaoh’s soldiers would discover the child. She made a wicker basket and filled the cracks with pitch (a kind of tar). She wrapped her little boy in a blanket and put him into the basket. She took the basket with the baby to the bank of the river and placed it among the reeds.

Yocheved told her daughter, Miriam, to hide behind a tree and watch to see what happens.

Pharaoh’s daughter saw the basket when she came to the river with her maidens to bathe. She ordered one of her maidens to bring the basket to her. When she looked inside she saw a baby. She decided to keep the baby and raise him as her own. The princess named him Moses.

When she heard a maiden say that the baby would need a nurse, Miriam ran from her hiding place and rushed to the side of the princess telling her that she knew of someone. Miriam was told to bring that woman to the princess.

Miriam brought her mother, Yocheved, who said, “I will care for him as if he were my own son.” Yocheved took her son home with her and nursed him and cared for him until he was old enough to go back to live with Pharaoh’s daughter.

Yocheved told Moses about his people, and of the land of Canaan where they had once lived. She told him that he must never forget that he was a Hebrew.

When Moses went to live in the palace, he did not forget what his mother had taught him.

Moses grew to be a young man in the palace. One day he went out to the fields where the Hebrews were making bricks because he wanted to see his people. He saw Hebrew slaves working in the hot sun with Egyptian taskmasters standing over them with whips in their hands. Moses saw an old man lift a pile of bricks to his back. The man took a few steps, stumbled and fell to the ground. A whip came down on his back, again and again. With a cry of anger, Moses sprang forward and took the whip from the hand of the taskmaster. Then Moses struck the taskmaster with all his might, and he fell to the ground, dead.

Moses quickly hid the body in the sand hoping that no one would find out what happened.

The next day, when Moses returned to the fields, he heard people talking about him and the taskmaster he had killed. He decided to flee from Egypt because he was afraid that Pharaoh would have him thrown into prison or killed if he found out what Moses had done.

Moses wandered for many days until he came to Midian. He sat down near the well to rest. The daughters of Jethro, a kind priest of Midian, came to the well with their sheep. Moses was very kind to the shepherdesses and lifted the heavy rock from the well and helped them draw water for the flock. When Jethro heard of the kind stranger at the well, he sent for him. Moses went to live in Jethro’s home.

Moses remained in Jethro’s home for many years. He married Zipporah, one of the daughters of Jethro. They had two sons, Gershon and Eliezer.

Moses became a shepherd. Every day he took Jethro’s sheep to the grassy places at the edge of the desert. He was very happy, but he would often think of his people in Egypt, and he wondered whether he would ever be able to help them.

One day, when Moses was near Mount Horeb with his sheep, he saw a bush in flames. The bush burned and burned, and still it did not burn up. Moses came closer to the bush to see why the flames did not burn it. And suddenly he heard a Voice come from the burning bush.

The Voice said, “Take your shoes off, Moses, because the ground on which you are standing is holy.”

Moses took off his shoes and bowed his head, for he knew that the Voice was the Voice of God.

The Lord told Moses that he wanted him to return to Egypt to free His people from slavery and lead them to the promised land of Canaan.

But Moses was afraid to go because he was afraid of Pharaoh.

The Voice told Moses not to be afraid because He would be with him. He told Moses to take his brother, Aaron, with him and go to speak to Pharaoh in the name of the God of Israel.

The next day Moses set out for Egypt. When he came to Egypt, he and his brother Aaron went to the palace of Pharaoh.

Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh that they came in the name of the Lord of Israel to ask that he let the Hebrews go to the wilderness to worship their God.

But Pharaoh laughed and said that the Hebrews may not leave the land because they might not want to return.

“The Lord had commanded that you let them go,” said Moses.

“I am not afraid of you or of your God,” said Pharaoh. “I will not let the Hebrews go.”

And Moses and Aaron left the palace of the king.

Then many plagues came upon Egypt. There were grasshoppers and insects which came in great clouds and ate the crops. There were frogs, and darkness and hail. Each plague became worse and worse. Cattle grew sick and died. The Egyptians cried out to Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go. And each time Pharaoh promised to let the Hebrews go if Moses would remove the plague. But when the plague was lifted from the land, Pharaoh’s heart became hardened and he refused to allow the children of Israel to leave the land.

Finally, God told Moses he would bring a tenth, and final, plague upon the Egyptians. God said, “Tell the Hebrews to get ready to leave Egypt right away. Tell them also to prepare a lamb each for every family. And let them have a family feast and eat the roasted lamb with matzot and with bitter herbs. Every year at this time, in all the many years to come, they must eat matzot for seven days to remember the time they were slaves in Egypt. And I will take my people out of the land of Egypt in the middle of the night.”

And Moses told his people all that the Lord had said. And that night, a terrible plague came upon Egypt — the first-born son in every Egyptian family died. But the plague passed over the homes of the Hebrews.

In the middle of the night Pharaoh called Moses and told him that the Pharaoh’s own son had died of the plague, too. He told Moses to quickly take his people out of Egypt.

And Moses hurried to take his people out of the land of suffering and slavery. The children of Israel were very happy to leave. At last, they were free again. Each family roasted a lamb and ate it as Moses had told them. Then, in the middle of the night, they left Egypt; and because they had no time to wait until their dough leavened, they baked unleavened bread or matzot.

On and on the Hebrews travelled in the wilderness until they reached the Red Sea. Then they looked back, and they saw the army of Pharaoh following them on their horses and in their swift chariots.

And the people were frightened and asked Moses if he took them out of the land of Egypt only to die in the wilderness.

But Moses said, “Do not fear, for the Lord is with us.”

Then Moses held his staff out over the Red Sea, over the tumbling waters. And suddenly the water parted and became two towering walls, between which was dry land. Quickly, the Hebrews passed through the Red Sea on the dry land. When they reached the opposite shore, they looked back and saw the army of Pharaoh rushing toward them between the walls of water. Then the walls began to sway and tremble, and with a roar, they fell on to the dry path between them. The rushing waters covered the army of Pharaoh. Horses and riders were covered by the waters of the Red Sea.

Safe on the shore stood the children of Israel. They danced and sang hymns of praise to their God who had freed them from the slavery of Egypt. Then they turned, and with Moses leading the way, they began their long, long journey to the land of Canaan.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_