



# Weaving God's Promises

## LESSON 5 Slaves in Egypt

### Summary of Today's Story

The Israelites, after settling in Egypt during a famine in Palestine (in Joseph's time), thrive and become numerous in population. Fearful of the growing numbers of these people, the Pharaoh enslaves them and treats them harshly, then orders the Hebrew newborn babies to be killed in order to reduce their population.

Moses is born under these conditions but is spared. He grows up in the pharaoh's household as an Egyptian, then is called by God—who appears in a burning bush—to save the Israelites and lead them to freedom.

### Where You'll Find Today's Story

#### **In the Bible**

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*.

**Exodus 1:1–7:13**

#### **In Children's Bibles**

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

#### **In Our Sunday Lectionary**

Today's story is told in church on the following Sundays:

Year B: Trinity Sunday

Year C: Third Sunday in Lent

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## Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

Today's story, Slaves in Egypt, is a difficult story to fit into one lesson, but if possible, it should be told all at one time in order for the full power of the story to be felt. This story is actually only half of the Moses story. The second part will be told next week.

Today's story begins when the people are forced into slave labor by Ramses II for his vast building projects. Moses is born during this period. The story ends when Pharaoh utterly refuses to listen to Moses and his brother Aaron. "Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them" (Exodus 7:13). Without God's intervention, through Moses, the situation is hopeless. Pharaoh has all of the power; the Israelites are slaves and are helpless.

But God prepares to redeem Israel, through Moses. Here God fights Israel's enemy—the Pharaoh of Egypt—to save the people of Israel and eventually to bring them to their own land. In the process, the people become a nation, God's people, a "holy people," with their own identity. Their lives will become focused on worshiping God. This experience of being slaves in Egypt is the beginning of that process.

We can draw much solace in a story of how God comes to help us even in our darkest times and hardest struggles. When things seem hopeless, God is still watching over us. God will save us, as God saved the Israelites. But as with the Israelites, God saves us in God's way, in God's time, not in ours. It is through constant prayer that we can grow in faith and trust in God during these tough times. And so, sometimes, our times of greatest difficulties are those times when God is forging us into "God's people."

These times may also be times of great spiritual growth. The Israelites learned the meaning of empathy from their experience as aliens in Egypt. They learned what it is like to be an alien and thus how to have compassion for aliens that may someday come among them. As we will hear over a dozen times in the books of Exodus and Leviticus, God uses this hardship in Egypt to remind the people, "Remember to love the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."

So in today's story, we learn again that *God stays with us, no matter what.*



## The Episcopal Thread

We also can say that we are slaves to sin, as the Israelites were slaves to the Egyptians.

But, as Anglicans, we are a practical people. We recognize that slavery and bondage is not just spiritual and symbolic, though it is that. We know that real slavery and bondage is still around, that people are still suffering its pain. The African-American experience in the United States, too recent a memory to be forgotten, is an example. Though no longer literally slaves, African-Americans still suffer from oppression and prejudice that offends the righteousness of God.

The Episcopal Church has always been committed to the ideals of social justice as a natural outgrowth of faith in God through Jesus Christ. Therefore we see this story of Slaves in Egypt not only as a story of the past, but a memory of the recent past and a reminder of oppression in the present.

In our Baptismal Covenant, we are asked, "Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" And we respond with a loud, "I will, with God's help."

Our prayers for justice, for the social order, for the human family and for peace for all remind us that we are to side with the oppressed of this world, as God sides with the poor and the oppressed. Look at our *Prayer Book* prayers on pages 814-835 to see how integral to our faith is the injunction to free all who are enslaved.



## Weaving God's Beloved Community

Enslavement does not belong in any part of God's Beloved Community.

It takes a probing eye to spot the various ways that our slave past still haunts and harms our society, and there are many: big and little forms of discrimination and prejudice, unjust laws, unequal funding for mostly Black communities, even environmental racism.

Outreach ministry towards underprivileged populations helps to ease the harm, but advocacy for legislative change makes an inroad to ensuring that God's Community can be built upon a foundation of just laws and not only on good feelings. But empathy helps.

Topics that can be discussed with children:

If you put yourself in a Hebrew slave's shoes, what do you think it would feel like? How would you pray to God?

When thinking of somebody who is being treated badly, what would you ask God to do for them?



## Gathering

As the children enter the classroom, engage them in a simple activity that relates to today's lesson. On pages 25

and 26, you'll find two Gathering Activity handouts to use if you wish. Below are other suggestions.

For the younger children, you might provide play dough for them to make bricks like the Hebrew slaves made for Pharaoh's building projects. Or you might have them make "burning bushes" to use during the storytelling time. For this activity, you'll need balloon sticks (or craft sticks) and streamers (or ribbons) in red, orange and yellow. Help the children cut several strips of streamers about 2' long and staple or tape them to one end of a stick, making a "burning bush." When you tell the story of Moses encountering God in the burning bush, the children can wave their "flames."

For older children, you might provide a wordsearch or crossword puzzle based on today's story. (You'll find an online resource for creating puzzles on page 2 in the Appendix, also found on the Website.) Or you might simply let the children enjoy a brief time of fellowship when they can visit with each other, share the week's news and build community and friendships.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer. You may use any prayer from the *Prayer Book* or from any book of prayers, or make one up yourself.



## Telling the Story

Read aloud today's story from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, tell the story in your own words, or read from the versions of the story we

provide, found on pages 8-24 (You'll find a prose version of the story of Moses, then a rhymed version of the story of the plagues, then a prose version of the story of the plagues.).

To bring the story to life, try one of these suggestions for enhanced storytelling:

- Use a flannel board with felt or paper figures as you are telling the story.

- When telling the story, use voice inflections to capture the power of the voice of God in the burning bush and the voices of Moses and Pharaoh.
- Invite the children to act out the major roles.

If the children made “burning bushes” during today’s Gathering time, invite them to shake their “flames” when you get to the part of the story where Moses encounters God in the burning bush.

You’ll find more ideas for bringing the story to life for the children on pages 2-3 under Storytelling Enhancements in the Appendix, also found on the Website.

This is a very important story in our history of salvation and God’s presence with us. It needs to be told slowly and clearly, but at this time you do not need to explain or discuss it. This is the time for children to hear the story. For now, simply let them absorb it in their minds and in their hearts. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it.



## Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your classroom.

### Materials:

- small table with a cloth to cover it
- 2 candles or a single large Christ candle
- matches
- Bible
- cross
- optional:* flowers (real, fake or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read one or two verses from today’s scripture to help the children connect the story that they just heard with the Bible. If working with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

### Suggestions for the reading:

For *younger children*: Exodus 3:7-8, Exodus 3:11-15

For *older children*: Exodus 3:1-15, Exodus 6:1-8

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

*Reader:* A reading from the book of Exodus:  
(*Read the selected passage.*)

*Reader:* The word of the Lord.

*All:* Thanks be to God.



Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite prayers of thanks for God's work in our lives during the past week. Ask children to remember when they have been aware of God's love and blessings, whether in school or at home, with friends or family or strangers.
- Welcome any prayers of concern or petition. Children may offer prayers for themselves or for others in need or trouble, including community needs such as food and shelter for the poor.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special times.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



## Sharing

Pass out the food and say a simple grace, like this one:

- Give us grateful hearts, O Lord, for all thy gifts, and make us mindful of the needs of others, in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Or invite the children to share a favorite grace from home. This helps them connect their spiritual lives at home with their lives in the church.

This is an excellent time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story that the children have just heard. Encourage the children to share their reactions to the story by asking questions such as:

- How was life for the Hebrew people?
- Do we sometimes treat people the way the Egyptians treated the Hebrews?
- What about Moses and his revelation from God? *(Encourage children to think about other ways in which we might hear God. We probably will never see a burning bush, but we may hear God calling us in some other way.)*
- How can we know that a message is from God? *(Hint: a command that is consonant with the scriptures—especially with the Lord's command to love God and to love one another—is a godly command.)*





## Memorization

Encourage the intermediate children to finish their

memorization of the books of the Bible, perhaps giving prizes to those who complete this challenge. Next week, we will be asking them to memorize the Ten Commandments.

Suggestions for ways to help the children with their memorization can be found on page 15 in the Appendix, also found on the Website.



## Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or

back to their homes with God's love and blessing.

The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- Thank you, God, for bringing us together in your church and for being with us as we hear your story. Send us back to our homes where we can spread your love to our family and to our friends, that we may learn to love you with all our hearts and to love our neighbors as ourselves, just as you commanded us to do. We ask this in Jesus' name.

*Amen.*

End the class with a dismissal that is used in church, such as:

- The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The children respond:

- And also with you.



## Weaving Our Faith

Before your closing prayer, help the children weave today's lesson together with their life experiences and their own thoughts and ideas by

asking questions such as:

- What was our story about today?
- Who did we talk about?
- What did God do in today's story?
- How did Moses react toward God? Obey God? Disobey? Argue with God?
- What did we learn about God from this lesson?

To help the children remember today's story, remind them of these key words or phrases:

- *slaves*
- *freedom*
- *call by God*



# Weaving God's Promises

## EXODUS 1:1-7:13

### Too many Israelites for the Pharaoh!

Abram, who is now called Abraham, has a son, Isaac. Isaac has two sons, Esau and Jacob. It is Jacob's sons that we follow now. Jacob has 12 sons, and his favorite is named Joseph. We will hear in another story about Joseph, and how his brothers are jealous of him and sell him to some men who take him to Egypt. Joseph ends up being a leader in Egypt, a favorite of the Pharaoh, and he ends up staying in Egypt and inviting his brothers and all their family to Egypt, too. Egypt is a nice place.

So the family of the sons of Abraham grows and grows in Egypt. They are now called Israelites, and sometimes they are called *Hebrews*. The Pharaoh—the king of Egypt—likes Joseph and his family and lets them stay there. But then there is a new king, and he is afraid that there are too many Israelites, and he doesn't know what to do with them. He is afraid they will take over the whole country. So he makes them slaves. He makes the Israelites work for the Egyptians without any pay. He makes them make bricks for buildings, and he puts them in the fields to grow crops, and he makes them work very hard. The people are miserable, and they are unhappy, and they are hurting and suffering.

Then the king has an idea. Whenever a Hebrew boy is born, he will be killed. If the baby is a girl, she can live. Soon there will be only Hebrew girls and no one can get married and have children, and there will not be more and more Hebrew people. What a clever idea!

So the king says to the Hebrews, "When a Hebrew boy is born to you, you have to throw him into the Nile River as soon as he is born. But you can keep your baby girls." And all the people are afraid and angry, but they do not know what to do, because they are slaves, and they own nothing and have nothing. They have no way to fight the king.



But something happens, and this is God's doing.

## **Moses is born**

A certain woman gives birth, and it is a baby boy. She is brave, and she hides the baby from the Egyptians for three whole months. The baby cries and she tries to quiet the cry. He grows bigger and she finds bigger hiding places for him. He makes noises and she makes bigger noises to hide his sounds. Finally, she knows that she can't hide him any longer. He is getting too big. She needs to either throw him into the Nile River, or she needs to find a way to keep him alive.

With tears in her eyes, she makes a big basket. Then she lines it with black pitch so it can float on water. Maybe some of her tears gets mixed into the pitch and gets into the basket. When she is finished making the basket and can't put it off any longer, she gives her beloved baby boy a hug and a kiss. Then she lays him carefully in the basket and puts a lid on it to cover him up. She puts the basket on the side of the Nile River where the water is still and quiet, by some long reeds that cover it up.

The woman's daughter, the baby's sister Miriam, stands a ways away. She can see the basket, and she watches to find out what will happen to it, and to her little three-month-old baby brother inside the basket.

Soon, who should come along but the Pharaoh's daughter herself! She has come to the river to take a bath. Her helpers are walking next to her, helping her with her towels and clothes. The daughter sees the basket, because it's not so well hidden anymore, and she wonders what it is. Her maid goes to fetch the basket. It is heavy—it doesn't feel like a basket of melons or bananas. And something is moving inside. *And* there's noise coming from inside the basket.

The princess, the Pharaoh's daughter, opens up the lid. To her surprise, it's a baby boy, and he is crying! Seeing this little helpless baby, hungry and crying and without his mother, she feels sorry for him. She knows that her father ordered the Hebrew baby boys to be thrown into the river, but right now, she just sees a beautiful helpless little baby.

“This must be one of the Hebrews’ children,” she says to her maids. “What shall I do with him?”

Miriam has been watching from behind some bushes. She comes out and says, “I can get you a Hebrew woman who can nurse the baby for you,” because she knows that the baby is crying because he is hungry. So Miriam runs back home and tells her mother, who is also the baby’s mother, “The Pharaoh’s daughter has found our baby boy and wants to keep him! But she needs a nurse to feed him and take care of him. She has asked me to find a nurse for the baby. Will you be that nurse? Just don’t tell her that you are his mother also!”

When the mother went to the princess, the princess says to her, “Take this baby and feed him and take care of him, and I will pay you.” So the mother raises her own son. And when he not a baby anymore, she brings him to Pharaoh’s daughter. Pharaoh’s daughter takes him in as her own son and names him Moses.

### **Moses grows up and runs away from home**

Moses grows up in Pharaoh’s palace as an Egyptian. But he also finds out he is a Hebrew. One day, he goes outside and sees the Hebrew people, his people, working to the bone because they are slaves. He sees one Egyptian man beating a Hebrew and he gets angry and kills that Egyptian. Then, because he knows that he is in trouble because he has killed an Egyptian, he runs away from Egypt.

Moses runs and runs, as far away from Pharaoh and his police as he could get. When he gets to a place called Midian, he stops at a well for some water and a bit of rest. He is thirsty and tired. There, he meets some young women who are daughters of a man named Reuel. Reuel invites Moses into his tent and Moses stays there for a long time. He marries one of Reuel’s daughters, named Zipporah. Moses stays there, taking care of the land, until finally, after many years, the king of Egypt dies.

Now the people are still slaves, and they groan under their hard, hard work. They cry to God for help, and their cry rises up to God. And God hears them and thinks of Moses.

## Moses meets a bush

One day, Moses is taking care of the flock of Zipporah's father Jethro. He walks the animals through the grasses and rocks of the wilderness until he comes to a big mountain. The mountain is called Horeb, and people call it "the mountain of God." It is a volcano, so it smokes and quakes and no one goes up there.

But Moses does. When he is on the mountain, he sees a bush on fire. Except that the bush is not on fire. It is blazing, and a flame of fire is coming out of it, but the bush is not burning. When Moses sees this bush, he is surprised and wonders what it is. He says to himself, "What a great sight! I need to see why this bush is not all burned up, even though it is on fire!"

When Moses starts to go toward the bush, God sees him and shouts in his ear, "Moses! Moses!"

Moses is surprised, but he is not afraid. He says to whoever is talking, "Here I am." Who is this he is answering to?

The voice says, "Don't come any closer. Take off your sandals first. You are standing on holy ground. It is I, the God of your father. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

Now Moses is very afraid, for he has heard about this God. He hides his face. He is afraid to look at God. He doesn't look at the bush anymore either, just in case God is in there.

God says to Moses, "I have been keeping track of my people in Egypt and how they are suffering. I have heard them crying out to me. I know they are hurting. Now is the time I will save them from the Egyptians. I will bring them out of Egypt, and I will take them to a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey. That means that I will take them to a land where there is plenty of good food to eat and good water to drink, so they will not be hungry or thirsty any longer, and they will not work for people as slaves."

But then God says to Moses, "But I need you. I am sending you to talk to Pharaoh, to make him bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

Moses is confused. “Why me?” he says. “Who am I to do this? I am nothing, a nobody!”

God says, “But I will be with you. And this is how you will know it is I, your God, who sends you. When you bring the people out of Egypt—and note that I say when, not if—you will worship me on this very mountain.”

But Moses isn’t so sure. He says to God, “When I go to talk to the Israelites and tell them, “The God of your ancestors sent me,” they are going to ask me, “What is his name?” Then what am I supposed to say? What is your name? Do you even have a name? What should I say to them?”

God says, “I AM WHO I AM. So tell the people, I AM has sent me to you. That should do it. That is my name.”

Moses still has trouble believing that he can do what God tells him to do. It’s a big job that God is asking Moses to do. God is asking Moses to go to the great king of Egypt, demand that the king set all those slaves free—the slaves that have been doing all of the hard work and all the building projects that the king wants done. And then Moses has to somehow make Pharaoh let those people free, and not kill them, and not kill him.

So Moses argues with God. He has plenty of excuses for not doing this scary task. “The people won’t believe me,” he says. “I am not a good speaker. I stutter. I just can’t do this.” But finally, after God promises that Moses’ brother Aaron will help with the talking parts, and God himself will help with the miracles, Moses goes on this way, back to Egypt.

## **Moses tries to talk to Pharaoh**

The first thing Moses and Aaron do, is to go to the hovels where the Israelites are living. They call the people together for a big meeting. Because Moses still thinks he can’t talk well, Aaron does all the talking. He tells them what God said to Moses, how God has heard the groaning of the people and seen their suffering, and how God will now free the people from the Egyptians. The people believe Aaron and Moses, and they cry for joy, and they bend down and worship and give thanks to God.



The meeting with Pharaoh does not go so well. Moses and Aaron say to him, “God of Israel says, ‘Let my people go. They need to worship God in the wilderness.’” But Pharaoh says, “Who is this God, that I am supposed to obey him and let all these people free? What nerve! I don’t know him, and I am the Pharaoh! Nobody tells me what to do with my slaves!”

Then Pharaoh thinks about how Moses has just asked for three days off for the people, so they can go into the wilderness—probably to party! Or maybe they will just stay there and never come back! Those lazy people!

So Pharaoh says to the taskmasters of the people—the ones who stand over the slaves and make them work harder and harder. He says to them, “Those people are lazy. They make bricks, but they don’t even get their own straw to make the bricks. Someone brings it to them. From now on, don’t give them any more straw for making those bricks. They have to gather the straw themselves. But even though they have to take the time to get their own straw, they still have to make the same number of bricks. Get straw, make bricks. No rest for them! And if they can’t make as many bricks because they take too long getting straw, too bad! You can beat them up!”

So the people are made to work even harder than before. The people suffer and hurt even more. They can take it no longer. Where is God, and what will God do now? How will God help Moses to free the people from slavery in this evil place?

# THE EXODUS: ESCAPE FROM EGYPT

## (Rhymed Version)

This is the brown and billowy sand  
That covers the great Egyptian land.

This is the sun, like fire hanging low,  
That bakes the sand to a sizzling glow,  
The sweeping brown and billowy sand  
That covers the great Egyptian land.

These are Egyptians, haughty and grim,  
Whose pyramids lie in the sun, so dim,  
The sun like a fiery ball hanging low  
That bakes the sand to a sizzling glow,  
The sweeping brown and billowy sand  
That covers the great Egyptian land.

These are the Hebrew slaves, downtrodden but proud;  
They build the pyramids touching the clouds  
For the Egyptians so haughty and grim  
Whose pyramids lie in the sun, so dim,  
The sun like a fiery ball hanging low  
That bakes the sand to a sizzling glow,  
The sweeping brown and billowy sand  
That covers the great Egyptian land.

This is the Pharaoh, ruler of might,  
Who makes the Hebrews work all day and night;  
The Hebrew slaves, downtrodden but proud,  
Who build the pyramids touching the clouds  
For the Egyptians so haughty and grim  
Whose pyramids lie in the sun, so dim,  
The sun like a fiery ball hanging low  
That bakes the sand to a sizzling glow,

The sweeping brown and billowy sand  
That covers the great Egyptian land.  
This is Moses, chosen by God  
To free God's people from the Pharaoh's rod,  
The Pharaoh, ruling the Hebrews with might  
By making them work all day and night;  
The Hebrew slaves, downtrodden but proud,  
Who build the pyramids touching the clouds,  
For the Egyptians so haughty and grim  
Whose pyramids lie in the sun, so dim,  
The sun like a fiery ball hanging low,  
That bakes the sand to a sizzling glow,  
The sweeping brown and billowy sand  
That covers the great Egyptian land.

This is a bush, burning bright with great noise,  
That speaks to Moses with God's own voice.  
The voice tells Moses he's chosen by God  
To free God's people from the Pharaoh's rod,  
The Pharaoh, who rules the Hebrews with might  
By making them work all day and night,  
Poor Hebrews, the slaves downtrodden but proud,  
Who build the pyramids touching the clouds,  
For the Egyptians so haughty and grim,  
Whose pyramids lie in the sun, so dim,  
The sun like a fiery ball hanging low,  
That bakes the sand to a sizzling glow,  
The sweeping brown and billowy sand  
That covers the great Egyptian land.

Moses says: LET MY PEOPLE GO!

And Pharaoh answers: NEVER!

These are the plagues that God sent to the land  
To move Pharaoh's heart and soften his stand.

The first plague: Water, turned into blood.  
The second plague: Frogs, frogs like a flood.  
The third plague: Gnats, in their food and their clothes.  
The fourth plague: Flies all around them, from their head to their toes.  
The fifth plague: The Egyptian's animals—all dead.  
The sixth plague: Hail, falling like lead.  
The seventh plague: Locusts, millions that fall.  
The eighth plague: Darkness, that blinded them all.

The ninth plague: The people, covered with sores.  
The Egyptian people could stand it no more.  
The people then plead, "Let them go, let them go!"  
But still the Pharaoh tells Moses "No!"

The tenth plague fall on the Egyptian sons.  
The firstborn were dead when the night is done.  
This is the Pharaoh, mourning and crying.  
He just buried his son. His heart is dying.  
"Go," he says. "Go quickly! You're free!  
Worship God, pray for us, and let us be."

These are the Hebrews, free people now,  
Leaving Egypt with their sheep and their cows,  
Led by Moses, who was chosen by God  
To free God's people from the Pharaoh's rod;  
The Pharaoh, no longer willing to fight  
To make the Hebrews work for him day and night.  
The Hebrews are not slaves but God's chosen and proud,  
They'll build their own promised land under the clouds,  
Leaving the Egyptians so haughty and grim,  
With their pyramids in the sun, so dim,  
The sun like a fiery ball hanging low,  
That bakes the sand to a sizzling glow,  
The sweeping brown and billowy sand  
That covers the great Egyptian land.



This is the deep water of the great Red Sea.  
Past the waters, the Hebrews will surely be free.

But wait! They can't cross—it's too deep and too wide,  
And here comes Pharaoh's army, in chariots they ride.  
“Help us!” The Hebrews to Moses all cry.  
“Between the Egyptians and the Red Sea, we'll surely die!”

This is Moses, with his arms spread wide.  
And lo! The waters rise up and divide!  
The Hebrews, free and praising God now,  
Leaving Egypt with their sheep and their cows,  
Led by Moses, who was chosen by God  
To free God's people from the Pharaoh's rod;  
The Pharaoh, who had ruled the people with might  
By making them work all day and all night.  
The Hebrews are not slaves, but God's chosen and proud;  
They'll build their own promised land under the clouds,  
Leaving the Egyptians so haughty and grim,  
Whose pyramids lie in the sun, so dim,  
The sun like a fiery ball hanging low,  
That bakes the sand to a sizzling glow,  
The sweeping brown and billowy sand  
That covers the great Egyptian land.

This is Pharaoh's army watching the Red Sea divide  
As the Hebrews step safely to the other side.  
They enter the sea, getting ready to chase them,  
When Moses makes the waters come together again.  
The horses and riders are thrown into the sea!  
God has saved his people! His people are free!  
God has found us and saved us! With love God came.  
Sing to the Lord! Praise to God's name!

# EXODUS 7:14-14:31

## (Prose Version)

### Pharaoh says No

God's people, the Hebrews, are still slaves in the land of Egypt. The Pharaoh will not set them free, even when Moses asks again and again: "Let my people go!" Finally, the time has come for the people to be free.

Moses is God's messenger, to talk to Pharaoh. Because Moses thinks he is a bad speaker, God lets Aaron, Moses' brother, do most of the talking. God tells them what to say and do. Together, Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh's palace. God is with them.

First, Aaron throws his stick down onto the ground and it turns into a snake. Maybe Pharaoh will see this trick and be afraid, and then let the people go. But then Pharaoh calls his own magicians, and they turn their sticks into snakes. Aaron's snake then swallows up the other snakes. But Pharaoh just sits on his throne and holds his head up.

"Now will you let my people go?" says Moses. "No!" says Pharaoh.

### God plagues the Egyptians

So God makes ten bad things happen to Egypt. They are called "The Ten Plagues" because a plague is a very bad sickness or evil. First, Moses tells Pharaoh what God is about to do, saying "God says, 'Let my people go.' If you do not, God will make you miserable by sending a plague to you."

The first plague happens to the water. God turns all of Egypt's water into blood. The water in their pools, their ponds and lakes, their bottles and water pitchers all turn into blood. The people cannot drink. The fish in the river die, and the river stinks. There is blood, blood everywhere—every place where there was water.

The Pharaoh says, "I don't care. Your people stay here as my slaves."

Then God sends frogs—not just a few frogs, but thousands of frogs, millions of frogs, frogs *everywhere*. There are frogs in the river and frogs in the bedrooms

and frogs in bed. There are frogs in the kitchens and in the cooking pots. When people open their oven, they find it full of frogs. When they go to bed, they find frogs on their pillows. When they walk, they step all over frogs.

At first the Pharaoh says, “Take away these icky frogs and I will let the people go.” Suddenly, all of the frogs die where they are—in the houses and yards, in the fields and the river. The whole land stinks of dead frog. But as soon as the frogs are gone, he changes his mind.

Moses says, “*Now* will you let my people go?” “No!” says Pharaoh.

Then God sends gnats, teeny flying insects—the third plague. This is how God does it. Aaron takes his stick and hits the dust and all of the dust in Egypt turns into gnats. The gnats land on the people and on the animals. Like dust, they cover everyone and everything. The whole land is one big swarm of gnats. But still...

Moses says, “*Now* will you let my people go?” “No!” says Pharaoh.

Then God sends flies, a gazillion flies—the fourth plague. The flies get into everything—into people’s clothes, into their backpacks, into their water jars. When someone opens his mouth, a fly flies in. When someone wakes up in the morning, there are flies all over his blanket. When someone puts on her shoes, she steps on the flies in the shoes. The flies cover the land like a giant black cloud. But the flies do not go where God’s people the Hebrews live. They go only to the Egyptian houses. Pharaoh promises to let the people go if Moses will get rid of the flies. But when the flies are all gone, it happens again.

Moses says, “*Now* will you let my people go?” “No!” says Pharaoh.

So then God sends the fifth plague, a dreadful sickness to all of the Egyptian animals, so all of the animals die. All of the animals that belong to the Egyptians—the horses and donkeys, the camels, pigs, sheep, dogs and cats—one day they are alive and the next day they are dead. But the animals that belong to God’s people the Israelites are still alive. This time, God does not take back the plague. The animals can’t come back to life again, once they are dead. But still...

Moses says, “*Now* will you let my people go?” “No!” says Pharaoh.

The sixth plague hits the Egyptian people. Moses and Aaron pick up a handful of ashes and throw the ashes into the air. The ashes take to the air and scatter all over Egypt and land on the Egyptian people. The ashes turn into painful sores all over the people and their animals. They cannot stand up or sit down. They hurt all over, all the time. The sores ooze and bleed and the people beg the Pharaoh, “Please, for our sake, let those people go! Take these sores away from us!” But what did the Pharaoh do?

Moses says, “*Now* will you let my people go?” “No!” says Pharaoh.

The seventh plague is a scary one. God makes the earth dangerous. Moses stretches out his hand toward the sky, and all of a sudden, hail begins to fall from the sky. Thunder booms and lightning crashes down, and the hail looks like balls of fire coming down all over the land. The hail is so thick and the balls are so big that when they land in the fields, they hurt or kill every person and animal who is outside. Every plant and tree falls down and dies. Now there is nothing left alive on the Egyptian land. But in the places where God’s people the Israelites live, there is no hail, only sweet sunshine.

Moses says, “*Now* will you let my people go?” “No!” says Pharaoh.

Then God calls forth billions of locusts, creeping and then flying over the land. The green and brown locusts eat everything. Whatever is left that the flies and gnats and animal sickness and the hail did not kill, the locusts finish off. They eat every single tree and plant that grows in Egypt. They crawl into every Egyptian house. When they fly in a cloud, the sky is black with locusts. When the locusts are finished and the sky is light again, the land is empty. Gone are the animals—eaten. Gone are the crops—eaten. Gone are the trees—eaten.

“Take these things away from us!” says Pharaoh. But when God sends a great wind to blow the locusts away, Pharaoh changes his mind again.

Moses says, “*Now* will you let my people go?” “No!” says Pharaoh.



The ninth plague makes the people very afraid. God sends deep, deep darkness. For three days, the people cannot see in front of them. They don't know where they are or where they are going. They can't find their food to cook, or their animals to feed, or their beds to sleep in. They can't find each other to hug. But if they could look toward where God's people the Israelites live, they would see that those people have light, and plenty of it. The Egyptian people are scared, too scared to move. What if they walk into...but *no!* I don't want to think about it! Again, Pharaoh promises to let the people go, but changes his mind again.

Moses says, "Now will you let my people go?" "No!" says Pharaoh.

## **The Passover**

Now it is time for the tenth and last plague. Moses warns Pharaoh that this last plague will be a deadly one. He even tells Pharaoh what will happen. "God says that at midnight, God will walk through Egypt, and the finger of God will touch every Egyptian household. Every firstborn will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on the throne to the firstborn of Pharaoh's maid, to the firstborn of all the animals. You are warned!" And then, Moses angrily walked out. But yet again, Pharaoh would not move.

Moses then goes to God's people the Israelites. He tells them to be ready for this night, for it will be a deadly night for anyone who is not ready. This is what the people have to do:

First each family takes a lamb and kills it. They take some of the blood from the lamb and spread it over the doorposts. This will tell the angel of God that the angel should not go into this house but to pass it by. Then the family will cook the lamb and eat it. "This is how to eat this supper: Put on your traveling clothes and your sandals, hold your staff in your hand, and eat it in a hurry, because after this night, you will leave Egypt in a hurry." God then says, "This is the Passover of the Lord, because I will pass through the land of Egypt tonight and strike down every firstborn in that land. But I will pass over the houses where you live when I see the blood on your doorposts. You will be safe." So the

people do as God commands. And because this is such an important event, they still do it every year to remember this night, and this remembrance is called the Passover.

And then they also make bread. But the bread has no yeast, so it is flat. The flat bread, called “unleavened bread,” shows that the people will leave Egypt in such a hurry that the bread they are making has no time to rise.

So the people do as God tells them, and they bow down and worship God, as they wait for this long, dark night to come.

### **The Tenth Plague Does It**

At midnight, the finger of God descends upon Egypt. It kills all of the firstborn—the firstborn of Pharaoh, the firstborn of the prisoner in jail, the firstborn of every cow and horse in the land. Pharaoh gets up in the night and sees his son dead. The Egyptian people get up in the night and see their firstborn children dead.

A loud cry goes up in the night. There is not a house without someone dead.

Pharaoh has had enough. “Go!” he says. “Take your people, your animals, your things, and go away! Get away from me and my people!”

God’s people the Israelites are ready. They had their clothes on and their sandals on. They are all packed. They have eaten their Passover meal. They get up in the morning and gather together, and Moses leads them out of Egypt. They never look back.

As they leave, God goes in front of them. God is in a pillar of cloud by day, leading them along the way. At night, God is in a pillar of fire, giving them light. In this way, they can travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, with the Lord inside, are there with them always. God is with them.

### **Crossing the Red Sea**

After a while, the people come to the Red Sea. They cannot cross it, for the waters are deep. They camp next to the sea.

Meanwhile, Pharaoh changes his mind. He sends his army of soldiers after the Israelites, to drive them back to Egypt or to kill them.

The people at the shore of the Red Sea look back and see the army of Egyptian soldiers with their horses and their chariots. “Help us!” they cry to Moses. “The soldiers will kill us, or the sea will drown us!”

But Moses says, “Do not be afraid. God will save you!”

Then God tells Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea. When Moses does this, God sends a strong wind that blows all night long. The wind drives the water back, so there is dry land. The people go into the sea on dry land! The water turns into a wall next to them, on their left and on their right. But they are dry and safe, just as God promised.

The Egyptian soldiers see the people walking on dry land over the sea. They get on their horses and chariots to chase the people. When they get onto the dry land that was the sea, God tells Moses, “Now stretch out your hand over the sea again.” When Moses does this, the walls of water come together again over the soldiers, and they all drown. Thus are God’s people freed from the Egyptians and saved by God.

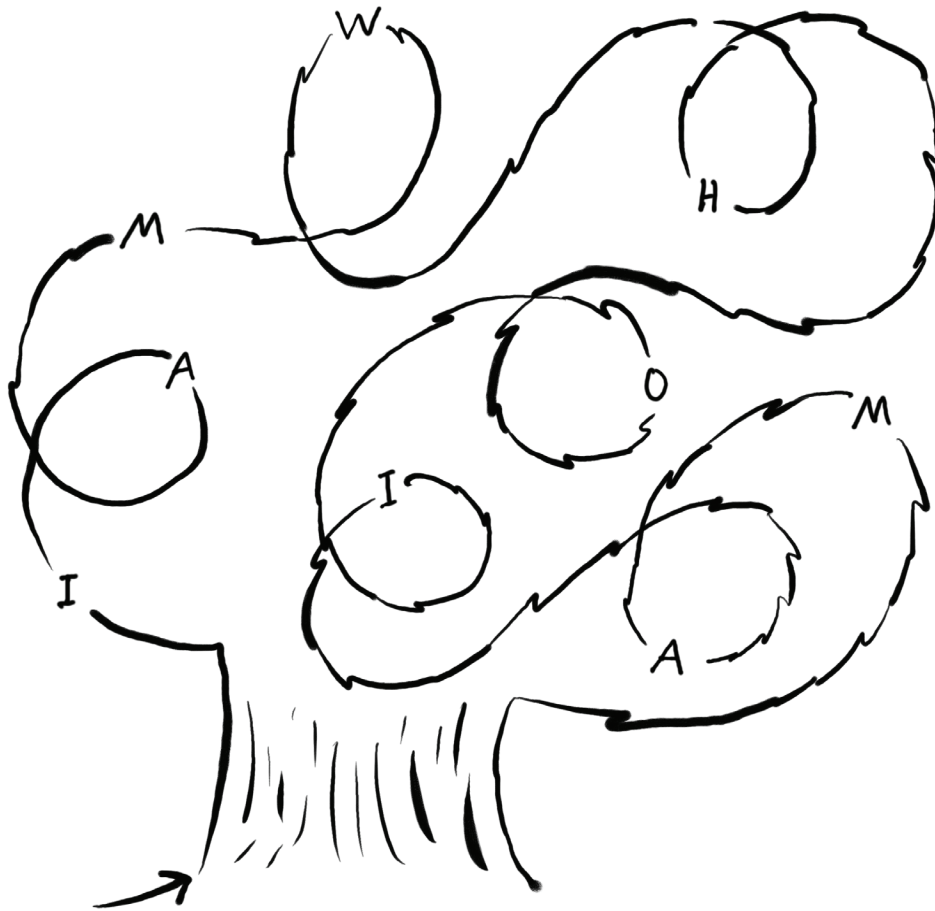


# Weaving God's Promises

## GATHERING ACTIVITY GOD TALKS TO MOSES

for Primary

From the burning bush, God tells Moses who God is. Follow the string that makes up this burning bush and write down the letters in the spaces at the bottom of this page to find out what God said.



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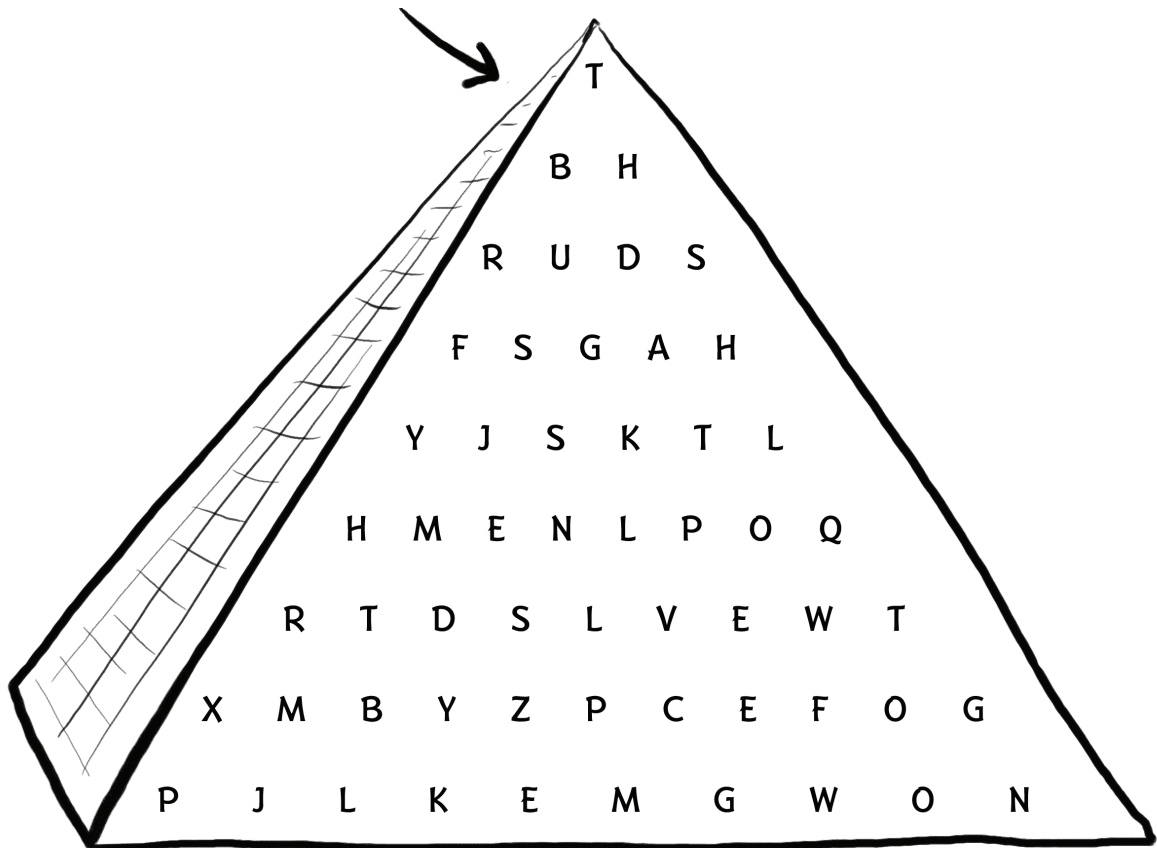


# Weaving God's Promises

## GATHERING ACTIVITY MOSES AT THE PYRAMID

for Elementary, Intermediate

Pick out every other letter and write it down at the bottom of this page to find out what message God wanted Moses to bring to Pharaoh.



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# Weaving God's Promises

## MOSES IN A BASKET for Preschool

Children make grass beds in baskets for baby Moses dolls.

### Materials:

*Baby Pattern* (p. 28) or 1" plastic baby dolls, 1 per child  
dried leaves and grasses or shredded green construction paper  
strawberry baskets  
small pieces of felt or fabric  
crayons

### Preparation:

If not using plastic baby dolls, copy and cut out the *Baby Pattern*, one for each child.

### Directions:

Give each child a *Baby Pattern* or doll and invite the children to make beds for their dolls:

1. (*If you are using pictures:*) Ask the children to color the picture of baby Moses.
2. Have each of the children fill a basket with dried grasses or shredded green paper, then tuck the baby Moses doll in the basket and place a small piece of fabric or felt on top of the doll as a blanket.



# BABY PATTERN





# Weaving God's Promises

## SOCK BABIES IN BASKETS for Preschool

Children make baby Moses dolls from white tube socks.

### Materials:

tube socks, 1 per child  
milk cartons or grocery bags, 1 per child  
commercial stuffing, cotton balls or shredded newspaper  
markers  
string

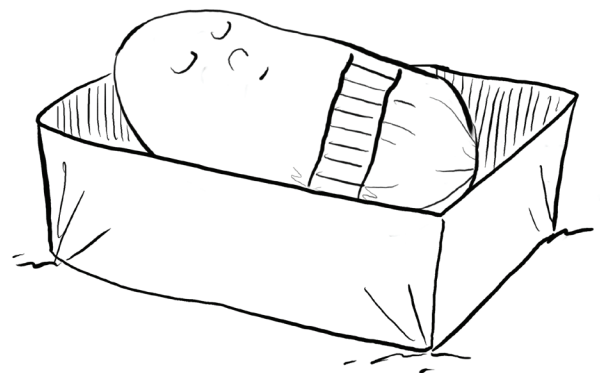
### Preparation:

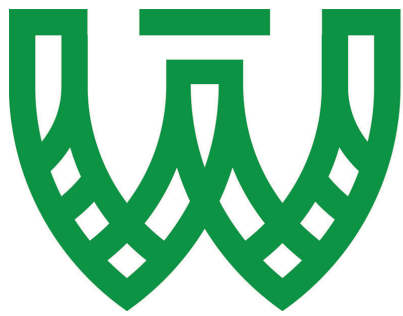
Cut off the tops of milk cartons or grocery bags.

### Directions:

Invite each child to make a baby Moses doll:

1. Help each child stuff a sock about half full. Tie a string around the sock to keep the stuffing in.
2. Have the children draw eyes and a mouth on the top of their socks, using markers.
3. Show the children how to fold the end of the sock back over the stuffed part to make a blanket.
4. Hand out the cut-off milk cartons and invite each child to place the baby in his "basket."





# Weaving God's Promises

## BAKING CUP BASKETS for Preschool

Children make baskets in the reeds, put baby dolls in the baskets and place them in the river.

### Materials:

- paper baking cups
- flannel scraps
- small plastic baby dolls
- green construction paper
- scissors
- shoe box lids and blue tissue paper or crepe paper

### Preparation:

Cut green construction paper into strips to look like reeds, about 6" long.

### Directions:

Distribute the baking cups and construction paper reeds and invite each child to make a basket for baby Moses:

1. Ask each child to glue the paper reeds to the outside of the baking cup and place a small piece of flannel in the bottom.
2. Distribute the plastic baby dolls and have each child lay the doll in the cup, then put a piece of flannel on top of the baby.
3. If you wish, have the children place blue paper in shoe box lids to represent the Nile River and put their baskets in the river.





# Weaving God's Promises

## BURNING BUSHES for Preschool, Primary

Children make burning bushes from a tracing of their hands and crinkled paper.

### Materials:

- white construction paper
- red tissue paper or cellophane paper
- scissors
- green crayons

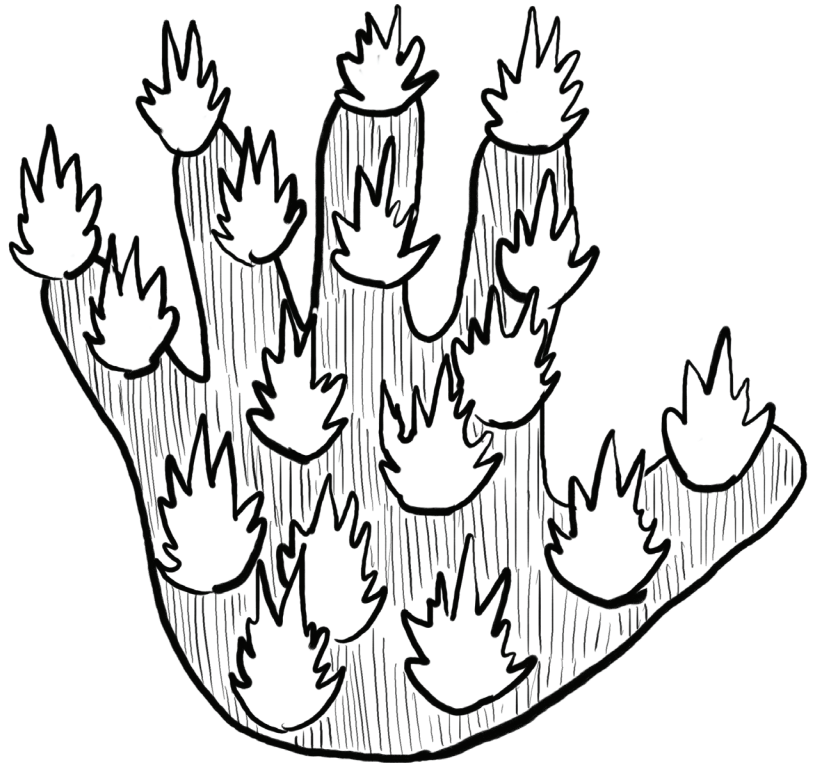
### Preparation:

Cut the red tissue or cellophane paper into strips to represent flames.

### Directions:

Invite each child to make a burning bush. Help the younger children as needed. Give the children these directions:

1. Trace around your hand on a piece of white paper, using the green crayon.
2. Color in your hand outline with a green crayon to make the bush.
3. Crinkle up pieces of cellophane paper or tissue paper and glue them onto your hand-shaped bush.





# Weaving God's Promises

## BURNING BUSH LIGHT CATCHERS for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make flame-shaped window ornaments that catch light like a burning bush.

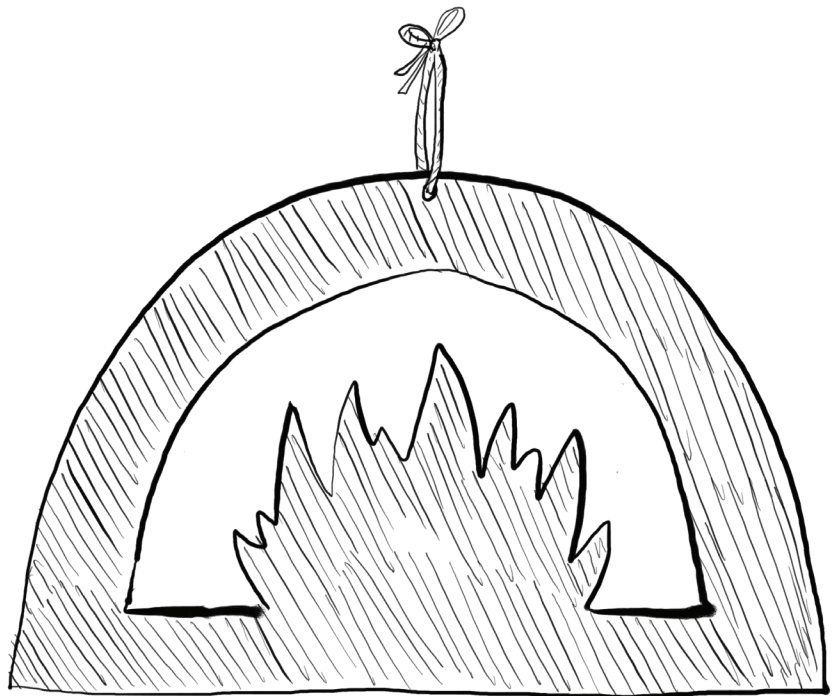
### Materials:

black construction paper  
red, orange and red tissue or cellophane paper  
string  
hole punch  
clear tape  
scissors  
*optional*: compass

### Directions:

Set out the materials and invite each child to make a light catcher. Give the children these directions:

1. Cut a piece of black paper into the shape of an arch by folding the paper in half and cutting half an arch shape. Use a compass if you wish.
2. While the paper is still folded, cut out a design that suggests flames (see picture).
3. Unfold the paper. Glue strips of tissue or cellophane paper to the cut-out areas.
4. Punch a hole at the top of the arch and string thread through. Hang in a window.





# Weaving God's Promises

## GET THOSE BRICKS for Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children try to capture the other team's brick, a game played like Capture the Flag.

You will need a large space for this game. Actually, it is best played outside.

### Materials:

2 items to serve as *bricks*: objects easy to grab, such as a scarf or a large, foam ball  
masking tape

### Directions:

Invite the children to play the Get Those Bricks game:

1. Use tape to divide the playing area in half. You may create a neutral zone in the middle if you wish. Place a *brick* (scarf or other object) somewhere at the back of each team's territory and designate a spot in the same area to be that team's *Egyptian Prison*.
2. Divide the class into two teams and assign each to one half of the playing area.
3. Explain that the object of the game is for players of one team to capture the other team's *brick* and return to their own territory without being tagged. At the same time, both teams try to keep their *brick* from being stolen or to tag the person who steals it.
4. If a player gets tagged while in the other team's territory, the player is sent to that team's *Egyptian Prison*. Players must stay there until someone from their own team reaches the *Prison* to free them. Then the freed person and the liberator walk back safely to their own side (they cannot be tagged on the way back).
5. A player can *either* capture the *brick* or free a prisoner, but not both. A maximum of two people at a time may be freed by a single person.
6. A successful capture of a *brick* gives the capturing team a point.



# Weaving God's Promises

## MOSES, MOSES! for Elementary, intermediate

Children play this human-knot game, where only *Moses* can free them from their “bondage!”

### Directions:

Ask the children to stand in a circle and invite them to play the Moses, Moses game:

1. Choose one child to be *Moses*. *Moses* leaves the room or turns his or her back. Now *Moses* is in *Midian*.
2. Ask each child to grab the hand of another child, but not the child next to them.
3. When everybody has joined both hands, fetch *Moses* to free the children by straightening out the human knot.
4. *Moses* looks at the knot and tries to figure out how it got tangled, then tells the group, one step at a time, what to do. For example, “Katherine, step over to the side. Marin, turn around. Justine, lift your left arm over Toni’s head.”

or

1. Send *Moses* off to *Midian*.
2. Ask everybody in the circle to join hands and get into a tangle by going over and under each other, while keeping their hands joined.
3. When the children are sufficiently tangled, call *Moses* out of *Midian* to free everybody.



# Weaving God's Promises

## MOSES AND PHARAOH HAVE A CHAT for Intermediate

Children play *Moses* and *Pharaoh* and debate whether or not to free the Hebrew slaves.

### Materials:

two extra-large t-shirts

*optional*: extra props, such as a cane or staff, Pharaoh's staff, head coverings

two tables

### Directions:

Invite the children to participate in this drama:

1. Arrange two tables in the front of the room, slightly facing each other at an angle (see illustration).
2. Choose two children to play *Moses* and two to play *Pharaoh*. For each character:
  - One child takes off his or her shoes and sets them on the table. The child then puts on the extra-large t-shirt over his or her regular clothes (ignoring the armholes) and, reaching under the bottom of the t-shirt, puts one hand in each shoe. This child will be *Moses'* or *Pharaoh's* head and legs.
  - The second child stands behind the first child, puts his or her arms under the t-shirt and out through the sleeves and holds the staff or cane. This child will be *Moses'* or *Pharaoh's* arms and will also do the talking.
2. *Moses* stands at one table, *Pharaoh* stands at the other table. *Moses* demands that *Pharaoh* free the slaves. *Pharaoh* tells why he refuses. Instruct the children to use appropriate arm and leg movements and facial expressions as they play their parts.
3. The other children watch the debate. When the first children are finished, the others take their turns at playing *Moses* and *Pharaoh*.







# Weaving God's Promises

## STORY MURAL for Elementary

*This activity takes four lessons to complete.*

Children begin a mural of the story of the Exodus beginning with today's story. They will continue to work on the mural for the next few weeks—until they reach the Promised Land.

### Materials:

- long sheet of butcher paper
- tape
- construction paper
- pencils
- pieces of scrap fabric and other decorative items
- sand, dried grasses, tissue paper and miscellaneous other materials to add interest
- glue
- markers and crayons
- scissors

### Preparation:

Cut a long sheet of butcher paper, estimating how much room you will need for the Exodus stories, and tape the paper to the wall. Label one end (the beginning of the mural) *Story of Moses* and the other end *Arrival at the Promised Land*.

### Directions:

Invite the children to work together to make an Exodus story mural. Give the children these directions:

1. Draw outlines on construction paper of the figures and things that will tell today's story of Moses, the experience of slavery and the scenes in Egypt, then cut them out.
2. Color the figures and add fabric and other decorative items. Add texture and interest to other items, too, for example, if making pyramids, you might glue sand onto the pyramids.
3. Glue the pieces onto the butcher paper, making pictures in order of their happening.

# LESSON 5: SLAVES IN EGYPT



## We Believe . . .

The Episcopal Church has always been committed to the ideals of social justice as a natural outgrowth of faith in God through Jesus Christ. Therefore we see this story of Slaves in Egypt not only as a story of the past, but a memory of the recent past and a reminder of oppression in the present.

Our prayers for justice, for the social order, for the human family and for peace for all remind us that we are to side with the oppressed of this world, as God sides with the poor and the oppressed. Look at our prayer book prayers on pages 814-835 to see how integral to our faith is the injunction to free all who are enslaved.



## Today's Story:



### Exodus 1:1-7:13

Today's story begins when the people are forced into slave labor by Ramses. Pharaoh has all of the power; the Israelites are helpless slaves. But God fights Israel's enemy—the Pharaoh of Egypt—to save the people of Israel and eventually to bring them to their own land.

We can draw solace in a story of how God comes to help us even in our hardest struggles. When things seem hopeless, God still watches over us. God saves us, as God saved the Israelites. But as with the Israelites, God saves us in God's way, in God's time, not in ours. It is through constant prayer that we can grow in faith and trust in God during these tough times. And so, sometimes, our times of greatest difficulties are those times when God is forging us into "God's people."

The Israelites also learned the meaning of empathy from their experience as aliens in Egypt. They learned what it is like to be an alien and thus how to have compassion for aliens that may someday come among them. God uses this hardship in Egypt to remind the people, "Remember to love the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."



## Words of Faith

*Slaves*—those who cannot make their own choices

*Freedom*—the ability to live as you wish, to make your own choices

*Call by God*—when God asks you to do something or be something

**Once again, it's clear: God stays with us, no matter what.**



## Sharing

Read the story of Moses and the Israelites in Egypt from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or from your family Bible.

To bring the story to life, try one of these suggestions:

- Have family members draw simple illustrations of each scene as the story is told.
- Use voice inflections to capture the power of the voice of God in the burning bush and the voices of Moses and Pharaoh.
- Invite family members to act out the major roles.

If your child made a “burning bush” during their lesson time, invite them to shake their “flames” when you get to the part of the story where Moses encounters God in the burning bush.

Reinforce the idea that God continues to be with God's people, even in the darkest times, just as God continues to be with us.



# Weaving God's Promises

## This Week at Home



- **If you have a lake, stream, pond or pool near your home, recreate the story of Moses, Miriam and Pharaoh's daughter.** Make a floatable “basket” (a plastic bowl might work if weighted with stones to keep it upright, or a real basket could be covered in clear plastic wrap). Place a baby doll in the basket. Have someone play the roles of Moses' mother and sister *Miriam* as you place the basket with the doll into the water. Nearby, have someone play the role of the Pharaoh's *daughter*, who discovers baby Moses. What do *Miriam* and Pharaoh's *daughter* say to each other? How do *Miriam* and her *mother* feel? How does Pharaoh's *daughter* feel? You could even extend the roleplay into Pharaoh's home; how does his *daughter* explain the sudden appearance of the baby to her father?
- **Talk about slavery.** Locate photos of enslaved persons, including children in modern times working many hours without pay. Children might liken slave work to doing household chores. Talk about the differences, if this comes up. Doing chores in the home is part of being a member of a family, and it affirms the worth of all members, while slavery demeans the dignity and worth of a person.
- **Explore adoption.** Is someone in your immediate family or extended family adopted? Do you have other friends or family members who were adopted? Talk about adoption, reflecting on Moses' adoption and what it led to, but also what adoption has meant to your family or friends.
- **Create your own burning bush.** If you have the space and can do it safely, using paper, sticks, twigs and small pieces of wood, create a “burning bush” (in a fire pit, fireplace or charcoal grill). Better yet, and safer, use red and yellow tissue paper with green leaves and create a bush in your living room or backyard. Imagine Moses standing beside the bush hearing God's speak. If that were happening now to your household, what would you imagine God might say to you? What might God be asking you to do? Talk about the ways God calls us to do things. How can we listen so we don't miss God's call?



## Household Prayer

Lord, we pray today for all people who are treated badly. Help us to hear their cries as you heard the cries of the slaves in Egypt, so that we may, by our actions, give hope and help to those in need; in Jesus' name we pray. *Amen.*

