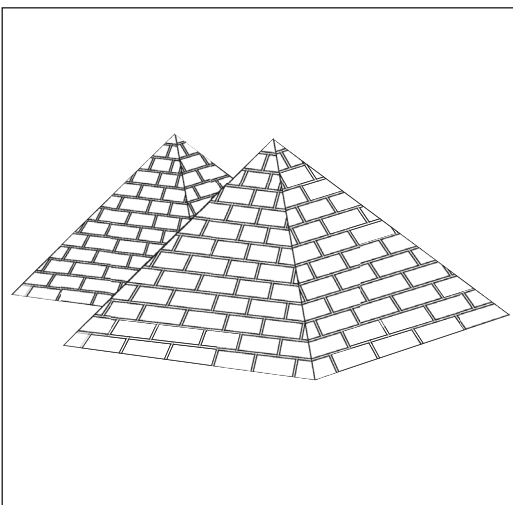
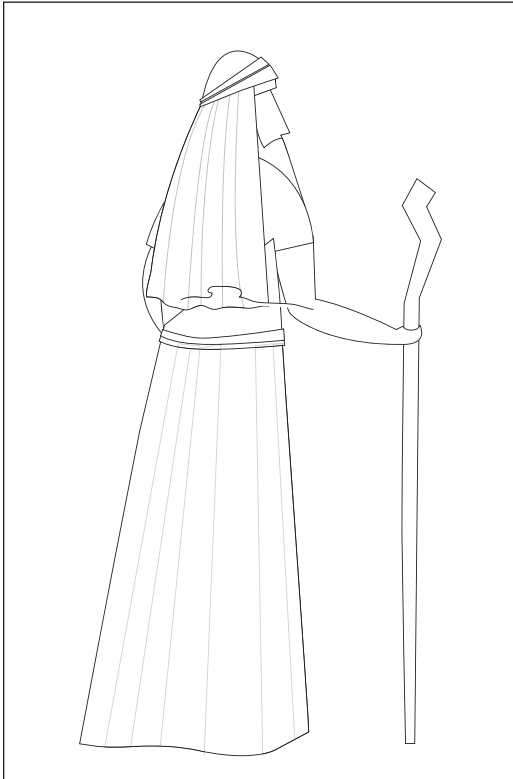


Escape from Egypt



Colour me!



Exodus 12:31-42

Despite his fear and hesitation, Moses, along with his brother Aaron, went to the king of Egypt and asked him to let the Israelites leave the country. The king refused and brought excuses. So God performed many miracles to convince the king. Finally, when the king realized that his family and his people were in danger of losing their lives, he decided to let God's people go.

During the night the king sent for Moses and Aaron and told them, "Get your people out of my country and leave us alone! Go and worship the Lord, as you have asked. Take your sheep, goats, and cattle, and get out. But ask your God to be kind to me." The Egyptians did everything they could to get the Israelites to leave their country fast. They said, "Please hurry and leave. If you don't, we will all be dead." So the Israelites quickly made some bread dough and put it in pans. But they did not mix any yeast in the dough to make it rise. They wrapped cloth around the pans and carried them on their shoulders.

The Israelites had already done what Moses had told them to do. They had gone to their Egyptian neighbours and asked for gold and silver and for clothes. The Lord had made the Egyptians friendly towards the people of Israel, and they gave them whatever they asked for. In this way they carried away the wealth of the Egyptians when they left Egypt.

The Israelites walked from the city of Rameses to the city of Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand of them, not counting women and children. Many other people went with them as well, and there were also a lot of sheep, goats, and cattle. They left Egypt in such a hurry that they did not have time to prepare any food except the bread dough made without yeast. So they baked it and made thin bread. The Lord's people left Egypt exactly four hundred and thirty years after they had arrived. On that night the Lord kept watch for them, and on this same night each year Israel will always keep watch in honour of the Lord.

Commentary

This event in Israel's history is so significant that Jews today still remember it at a special annual festival called the Passover. The Egyptian king had refused to release such a large slave workforce, but a series of natural disasters eventually persuaded him to let God's people go free. The final tragedy had included the death of the king's own son, although the sons of the Israelite families had been spared as the angel of death 'passed over' (giving us the word 'Passover') their homes.

After this, the Egyptians wanted them to leave their country as soon as possible, and so there wasn't even time to bake bread properly for the journey. This is why, at the Passover festival, flat bread (that is, bread without yeast) is eaten as a way of remembering the day when the Israelites escaped slavery. It was the moment they became a free people again – free to go where they wanted and, even more importantly, free to worship and follow the Lord their God, who had promised to watch over them. This was the beginning of a whole new chapter in the life of God's people.

Questions

- ▶ What sort of conversations do you think might have taken place when the Israelites got the news that they were going to leave Egypt?
- ▶ Why was there such a rush to do everything on that one night?
- ▶ How easy would it have been to get used to being free after so many years of having to do what others told you to do?
- ▶ Are there special times in your family life that you like to look back to and remember? How can you be sure never to forget them?

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Visual aid

Use a small suitcase or bag as a focus for the start of the journey of escape that takes place in this story. Think about what you would pack in a hurry.



Activity idea

Flat bread is better known in the Bible as 'unleavened bread'. You can make this as a family, using flour, a little oil and water, following one of the simple recipes on the internet. Talk about how Jews eat this bread every year to remind them of the day they escaped from Egypt. What does the taste make you think of?



Prayer idea

The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years before this great escape. Many people today do not have freedom: they cannot choose where to go, who to meet or what to do. Pray today as a family for those who are trapped because they have no money, no food or no friends. Use a piece of string with three knots tied into it; after each prayer, ask a different member of the family to untie a knot as a way of seeing God bring freedom for the people you are praying for.

Key verse

On that night the Lord kept watch for them. (Exodus 12:42)

New Testament story link

Luke 22:14-19: Jesus celebrates the Passover with his friends and gives a new meaning to the special bread that they are eating.



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