

The first Passover happened long ago in the far-away country of Egypt.

A mean and powerful king, called Pharaoh, ruled Egypt. Worried that the Jewish people would one day fight against him, Pharaoh decided that these people must become his slaves. As slaves, the Jewish people worked very hard. Every day, from morning until night, they hammered, dug, and carried heavy bricks. They built palaces and cities and worked without rest. The Jewish people hated being slaves. They cried and asked Yah for help. Yah chose a man named Moses to lead the Jewish people.



Moses went to Pharaoh and said, “Yah is not happy with the way you

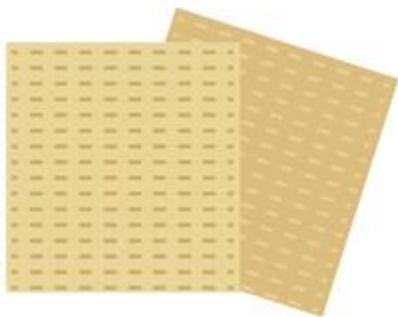
treat the Jewish people. He wants you to let the Jewish people leave Egypt and go into the desert, where they will be free.” But Pharaoh stamped his foot and shouted, “No, I will never let the Jewish people go!” Moses warned, “If you do not listen to Yah, many terrible things, called plagues, will come to your land.” But Pharaoh would not listen, and so the plagues arrived. First, the water turned to blood. Next, frogs and, later, wild animals ran in and out of homes. Balls of hail fell from the sky and bugs, called locusts, ate all of the Egyptians’ food.



Each time a new plague began, Pharaoh would cry, “Moses, I’ll let the Jewish people go. Just stop this horrible plague!” Yet no sooner would Yah take away the plague than Pharaoh would shout: “No, I’ve changed my mind. The Jews must stay!” So Yah sent more plagues. Finally, as the tenth plague arrived, Pharaoh ordered the Jews to leave Egypt.



Fearful that Pharaoh might again change his mind, the Jewish people packed quickly. They had no time to prepare food and no time to allow their dough to rise into puffy bread. They had only enough time to make a flat, cracker-like bread called matzah. They hastily tied the matzah to their backs and ran from their homes.



The people had not travelled far before Pharaoh commanded his army to chase after them and bring them back to Egypt. The Jews dashed forward, but stopped when they reached a large sea. The sea was too big to

swim across. Frightened that Pharaoh's men would soon reach them, the people prayed to Yah, and a miracle occurred. The sea opened up. Two walls of water stood in front of them and a dry, sandy path stretched between the walls. The Jews ran across. Just as they reached the other side, the walls of water fell and the path disappeared. The sea now separated the Jews from the land of Egypt. They were free!



Each year at Passover, we eat special foods, sing songs, tell stories, and participate in a special meal designed to help us remember this miraculous journey from slavery to freedom.