The Story of Moses

Background
Focus: the one who was drawn out of the reeds by an Egyptian princess to draw the people of God out of Egypt (Exodus 1:8-17:7, 19:1-40:38, Deuteronomy 34:8)

The princess who rescued Moses from the river Nile gave him an Egyptian name that is translated by the Hebrew verb “to draw out.” He was drawn out from the reeds of the Nile by the daughter of the Pharaoh to draw the people of God out of bondage in Egypt.

When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai, his face was shining after his being so close to God and God being so close to him. The same thing happened when he went into the Tabernacle to pray (Exodus 35:29-25). He was in the wilderness for forty years as a shepherd working for his wife’s father, Jethro, a priest of Midian. Then he was in the wilderness another forty years before his death on Mt. Nebo where he looked over the river Jordan to see the Promised Land, but he could not cross over.

Material
The basket for The Story of Joseph is on one of the Old Testament shelves.

It contains:
- a tan felt strip underlay
- baby Moses with blanket in basket
- green felt reeds
- burning bush
- 2 blue felt “water” pieces
- 2 quail in box
- clear box of “manna”
- staff
- rock
- Mount Sinai
- golden calf
- broken commandments tablet
- Ark of the Covenant
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movements</th>
<th>Words</th>
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<tr>
<td>Move with deliberation to the shelf where the material waits.</td>
<td>Watch. Watch where I go.</td>
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<td>Pick up the basket containing the material and return to the circle.</td>
<td>We need something else.</td>
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<td>Go and get the mountain from the shelf.</td>
<td>Everyone needs to be ready.</td>
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<td>You may need to say:</td>
<td>After many years a new Pharaoh ruled. He did not remember what Joseph had done for Egypt. The People of God became slaves. They were trapped and could not go home.</td>
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<td>Take the underlay from the basket and unroll it just enough so that the first object will fit, right to left (storyteller's perspective).</td>
<td>There were so many of the People of God in Egypt that the Pharaoh was afraid they would take his kingdom away from him, so he said that all the baby boys had to be killed.</td>
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<td>Place the baby Moses in the basket on the underlay. Slowly cover it with the green felt reeds.</td>
<td>One of the mothers made a basket of bulrushes woven together and hid the baby in the basket. She put the basket in the reeds by the Nile.</td>
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<td>The daughter of Pharaoh found the basket. She named the baby &quot;Moses&quot; and raised him in the palace.</td>
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<td>When Moses was a young man, he saw an Egyptian beating one of the People of God. Moses grew angry and killed him. Then he ran away into the desert.</td>
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<td>Moses stayed with the family of Jethro. He married Zepporah, one of Jethro’s daughters, and became a shepherd. He lived there for forty years.</td>
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<td>Place the burning bush on the underlay as you speak of it.</td>
<td>One day while Moses was taking care of Jethro’s sheep, he took them to the mountain of God, Mt. Horeb, which is also called Sinai. Suddenly he saw a bush that was burning but did not burn up.</td>
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God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. God told Moses that the cries of the People of God in Egypt had been heard. Moses was to go and set the people free.

Moses said, “But who am I to do such a thing?”

God said, “I will be with you.”

“What is your name?”

“My name is Yahweh. I am who I am.”

“Can’t you send someone else?”

“Aaron, your brother, will go with you. He will speak for you.”

So Moses went back to Egypt to tell the Pharaoh to let his people go. Moses went many times to the Pharaoh to tell him to let God’s people go, and many times the Pharaoh said, “No!” Terrible things happened in the land of Egypt. Finally the Pharaoh said, “Yes.”

Place the two pieces of felt water on the underlay and unroll them to show the parting of the waters. Move one of your fingers through the opening to show how the people went through.

God helped Moses lead the people through the water into freedom.
Moses led the people through the desert for forty years. The People of God grew tired and hungry and discouraged – and they grumbled to Moses.

But God showed the people that God was with them by giving them quail and manna to eat in the desert.

When the people were thirsty from traveling in the desert, they complained to Moses, and Moses talked with God. God told Moses to strike a rock with his staff. Water came out of the rock so the people could drink.

Something happened that made God angry. Moses did not keep faith with God in the midst of the people, so God told Moses that he would see but never enter the Promised Land.

The people were free. But they didn’t know the best way to go. With God’s help, Moses led the people to God’s mountain, Mt. Sinai, where God had spoken to him from the burning bush. And Moses went up on the mountain to talk with God. The people waited... and waited... and waited. Moses was gone a long time.

The people began to think Moses was never coming back, so they asked Aaron to make them a new god to lead them. Aaron took all the gold the women were wearing and melted it. Then he shaped the melted gold into a calf. He gave the calf to the people saying, “Here is your god.” And the people built an altar and worshiped the golden calf.

Moses came down from the mountain; his face was shining. He carried the Ten Best Ways, but found the people worshipping the golden calf. He grew angry and broke the stone tablets on which the Ten Best Ways were written. He took the golden calf and threw it into the fire. The people were sorry, so God gave Moses the Ten Best Ways again, and Moses gave them to the people.
Place the Ark of the Covenant on the underlay. Cover the Ark with your hand when you speak of the tent.

God told Moses to have the people make a box called an ark to hold the Ten Best Ways. The box was covered with gold, and it had poles on the sides so the people could always carry it with them wherever they went. God told Moses how to make a tent called a tabernacle for the ark. When the people stopped to rest in the wilderness, God’s glory filled the tent, and Moses came close to God there. When he came out his face was shining.

After forty years, they came to another mountain, Mt. Nebo. Moses looked over into the Promised Land from the mountaintop and God said, “I will give this land to the People of God, but you will not cross over.”

Moses died there and no one knows to this day where he was buried.

Touch the underlay with respect when you speak of Moses’ being buried.

Sit for a moment and look at the story from beginning to end to let the story rest. Then begin the wondering.

- I wonder what part of the story you liked best?
- I wonder what part of the story was the most important?
- I wonder what part was about you or what part you were in?
- I wonder if we could leave any of the story out and still have all that we need?
After the wondering is over, put the story away carefully. Pick up each object in reverse order and remind children what the object is, saying, for example, “Here is the burning bush.” After all of the story is back in the basket, carefully model how to roll the underlay back up and place it in the basket as well. Return the lesson to its spot on the shelf. Then return to your spot in the circle and dismiss the children one by one to do their work.