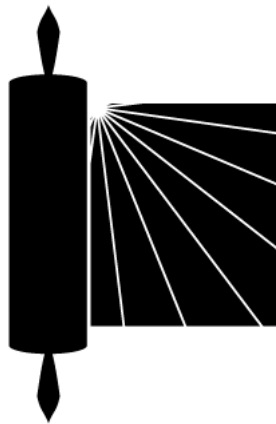


... and here the child asks...

A Passover Inquiry



HILLEL'S JOSEPH MEYERHOFF
CENTER FOR JEWISH LEARNING

מגיד

Recite the Haggadah

Raising the matzah, the leader declares:

This is the bread of (oppression, poverty, simplicity, responding) which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.

Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are needy come and celebrate the Passover. At present we are here; next year may we be in Israel. At present we are slaves; next year may we be free people.

YOUR HAGGADAH NAVIGATOR

1. You have four choices for defining the kind of bread our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Read the paragraph four times, substituting one of the four words each time.
2. How does this change the meaning of the paragraph?
3. Would you invite the hungry to a meal featuring “bread of affliction” as the main course? Why do they do it here?
4. What’s the connection between inviting the oppressed and the redemption of Israel?
5. Why do we declare that we are slaves? How does it relate to the statement, “all who are hungry come and eat”?
6. What is the difference between being hungry and being needy?

The second cup of wine is poured and the youngest present asks the four questions:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

1. On all other nights we eat chametz and matzah. Tonight, why do we eat only matzah?
2. On all other nights we eat any kind of herbs. Tonight, why do we eat the bitter herbs?
3. On all other nights we do not dip even once. Tonight, why do we dip the greens twice?
4. On all other nights we eat sitting or reclining. Tonight, why do we all recline?

The answer given in the Haggadah is as follows:

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord our God took us out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Had not God taken our forebears out of Egypt, then we, our children and grandchildren would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. Even if we all were wise, and perceptive, experienced, and versed in Torah, it would still be our duty to tell about the Exodus from Egypt. The more one talks about the Exodus, the more praise one deserves.

YOUR HAGGADAH NAVIGATOR

1. To which of the questions does this reply respond?
2. Why is it not sufficient to know the story? Why are we duty bound to *tell about the Exodus from Egypt*?
3. What is the purpose of storytelling on Passover?

The Haggadah continues:

It happened that Rabbis Eliezer, Joshua, Elazar ben Azaryah, Akiva and Tarfon were reclining at the seder table in Bnei Brak. They spent the whole night discussing the Exodus until their students came and said to them: “Rabbis, it is time for the recitation of the *Shema*.”

YOUR HAGGADAH NAVIGATOR

1. What is the theme of this story?
2. What does this story have to do with stories of the Exodus?
3. Why is this story in the Haggadah?

The following part of the Haggadah is taken from the Talmudic tractate Brachot, which discusses the blessings rendered during prayers, blessings over food, etc. The Exodus from Egypt is a central part of the *Shema* prayer which the rabbis required to be said in the morning and in the evening. Rabbi Elazar Ben Azariah wonders how it was learned that one should mention the Exodus from Egypt during the evening. He gives Ben Zoma the credit for coming up with an interpretation that makes sense to him. How does Ben Zoma learn that the Exodus from Egypt must be said at night?

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said: “I am like a seventy-year-old man and I have not succeeded in understanding why the *Exodus* from Egypt should be mentioned at night, until Ben Zoma explained it by quoting: ‘You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shall you eat unleavened bread with it, the bread of affliction; for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste; that you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt **all the days of your life.**’”

The Torah adds the word “**all**” to the phrase “**the days of your life**” to indicate that the nights are meant as well.

The sages declare that “the days of your life” means the present world and “all” includes the messianic era.

YOUR HAGGADAH NAVIGATOR

1. Why does the word “all” require interpretation?
2. What is this story doing here? Why should we know this?
3. If we are required to recite the Exodus from Egypt every night, why is this night so necessary?
4. Why are all these sections of the Haggadah considered part of the Exodus from Egypt?