

Going from Observer to Participant – A Rest Stop on the Exodus from Egypt Rabbi Daniel Goldfarb, Director, The Conservative Yeshiva, Jerusalem

The Torah tells us that Am Yisrael left Egypt in a rush ("b'chipazon", Deut 16:3). One way Leil HaSeder recalls the Exodus is that it, too, is often rushed. Below is a short text study which can provide a pause en route, "food for thought," to stimulate deeper engagement with the Haggadah than the typically hurried recitation allows. It can be done in pairs (chevruta style) or by all together. 3-5 minutes, then "back to the journey."

Just before the Hallel at the end of the *Magid* (Telling the Story) section, we recite

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לְרַאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם
שְׁנָאֵמֶר: וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעָבוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם

In every generation each of us should feel as if we personally came out of Egypt, as it says, (Exodus 13:8) "And you shall tell your child on that day saying, 'It is for what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt'."

This text, including the Biblical verse, is a quote from the Mishna (Pesachim 10:5), some 1800 years old, which includes a very early account of the Passover Seder. Our ceremony today is based on this chapter from the Mishna.

What is the Hagadah instructing us to do here? What word in the Biblical verse is the basis for the command?

What does it mean "to feel as if you personally came out of Egypt"? Is it easy to do? Is "Egypt" only a historical event from the distant past or can we identify with our ancestors, their moments of crisis or triumph? What other events in Jewish history, ancient or recent, can we feel a personal connection to?

If you have another 2-3 minutes, do the paragraph here.

If people are getting hungry or restless, go straight to "In conclusion" below.

In fact, perhaps you noticed that the Hagadah used a similar phrase earlier:

וְהָיָה שְׁעַמְדָה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ
שֶׁלֹא אֶחָד בְּלִבָּד עָמַד עֲלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ
אֲלֵא שְׁבַכְל דּוֹר וָדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עֲלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ
וְהִקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצִילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם

And it (God's help) has sustained our ancestors and us.
For not only one enemy rose up against us to destroy us,
but in every generation there are those who rise up against us to destroy us, but the Holy One,
praised be He, delivers us from their hands.

This statement was added to the Hagadah about 1000 years ago (in the Geonic period). Has it lost its relevance? What are the dangers the Jewish people face today?

In conclusion – when the Hagadah says "in every generation" what is it trying to do? Can you think of *other* aspects of the Seder ceremony that are intended to draw the participants into "the experience", e.g., how we explain the matza and the maror (bitter herbs); the way we sit, etc?