

Embracing the Stranger, by Rabbi Ashira Konigsberg

Contributed by [Alon Ferency](#)

Source:

Ha Lachma Anya

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. All who are hungry, let them come and eat, anyone who is needy should come and make Pesah. Now we are thus, but next year we should be in Israel. Now we are slaves, but next year let us be free.

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Alepha Beta of Ben Sirach (10th century midrash aggadah)

All who are needy: Your table should always be spread for anyone who would come and it will be fitting for God's presence to be spread above it.

Exodus 23:9

You shall not pressure strangers, for you know the being of the stranger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:33-34

When a stranger lives with you in your land, you shall not torture them. The stranger living with you should be as a citizen for you. And you should love him as you love yourself for you were slaves in Egypt. I am God, your God.

Rashi, Leviticus 19:34

For you were slaves: A blemish that you possess, you should not point out in your friend.

Deuteronomy 10:19

And you should love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus Rabba 9:3

A story is told about Rebi Yanai who was walking on the road and saw a particularly distinguished man. He asked him to visit his home and the man agreed. He brought him home, and fed him, and gave him wine and. He tested him in Bible and found he knew none; in Mishnah, and found he knew none; in Aggadah, and found he knew none; in Talmud, and found he knew none. He said to him, why don't you lead the prayer after meals, the man said, Yanai should be saying the prayer in his own house. Yanai asked, can you repeat what I'm about to say? The man said yes. Yanai said: A dog has eaten the bread of Yanai. The man replied: My inheritance is in your possession and you withhold it from me?! Yanai said: what inheritance of yours is with me? The man said: Once I passed a school and heard those inside saying "The Torah was commanded to us by Moses, it is an inheritance for the congregation of Israel." It doesn't say the congregation of Yanai, rather the congregation of Jacob.

Points for discussion:

- Why does Yanai initially invite this man to his house?
- How would you characterize Yanai's interaction with his guest?
- What would you articulate as the moral of this story? What is the midrash trying to teach us?
- Is there a part of you that is like Yanai? Is there a part of you that is like his guest?
- How does the experience of the Passover seder help us to see opportunities for teaching and learning from all who are present?

