

The Haggadah's Missing Page

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The Seder is all about answering questions. But one question remains unanswered, and that's the most important question – Why? We are taught, "In every generation, each person must see him/herself as if s/he were redeemed from Egypt." But why? Why return to Egypt year after year? Why re-taste the bitterness of slavery? Ask the Torah – What difference does this experience make for me? How am I shaped by the experience of slavery and liberation? Here is the Torah's response. Out of Exodus comes a fully-formed social vision, an ethic, and way of looking at history. Read each verse, and ask how the experience of Egypt shapes us, shapes our behavior, our society, our expectations for the world. This is the missing page from the Haggadah, the answer to Why?

Exodus 22:20 – You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, *for you were strangers in the land of Egypt* You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan.

Exodus 23: 5 – When you see your enemy's mule lying under its burden and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him. You shall not subvert the rights of your needy in their disputes. ... You shall not oppress a stranger for you know the soul of the stranger *having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt*.

Leviticus 19:33 – When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, *for you were strangers in the land of Egypt*. I the Lord am your God.

Leviticus 25:35 – If your kinsman, becomes poor, and his means fail, then you shall uphold him, you shall hold him as though a resident alien, let him live by your side: do not exact from him advance or accrued interest, but fear your God. Let him live by your side as your kinsman. Do not lend him money at advance interest or give him your food at accrued interest. I the Lord am your God, *who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan*, to be your God.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 – Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the stranger in your settlements so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. *Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt* and the Lord your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Deuteronomy 10:17 – God shows no favor and takes no bribe but upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow and befriends the stranger providing him with food and clothing. You too must befriend the stranger, *for you were strangers in the land of Egypt*

Deuteronomy 24:17-22 – You shall not subvert the rights of the stranger or the fatherless; you shall not take a widow's garment in pawn. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore do I enjoin you to observe this commandment.

When you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf in the field, do not turn back to get it; it shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow – in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat down the fruit of your olive trees, do not go over them again, this shall go to the stranger, the fatherless and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over

again; that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. *Always remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt*; therefore do I enjoin you to observe this commandment.

Exodus 20:1-2 – I am the LORD your God who *brought you out of the land of Egypt* the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods besides Me.