

DON'T PASS OVER YOUR PESAH!

1. How One Word Captures the Entire Purpose of Seder Night

I. The Obligation

1. Exodus 13 (Parashat Bo)

“Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival of the Lord. ⁷Throughout the seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten; no leavened bread shall be found with you, and no leaven shall be found in all your territory. ⁸And you shall explain to your child on that day, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt.’

2. Mishnah Pesahim 10:5

In each and every generation a person must view himself as though he personally left Egypt, as it is stated: “And you shall tell your child on that day, saying: It is because of this which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.” Therefore we are obligated to thank, praise, glorify, extol, exalt, honor, bless, revere, and laud the One who performed for our forefathers and for us all these miracles ...

1. ספר שמות פרק י"ג (פרשת בא)

וְשִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מַצֵּת וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי חַג ה' : מִצּוֹת יֵאָכֵל אֶת שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לָּךְ חֶמֶץ וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לָּךְ שְׂאֹר בְּכָל-גְּבֻלְךָ : ח וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם :

2. משנה פסחים פרק י' משנה ה'

בְּכָל דוֹר וְדוֹר תִּיב אָדָם לְרֵאוֹת אֶת עֲצֻמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם, שְׁנֵאָמַר, "וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם." לְפִיכֵן אֲנַחְנוּ תִּיבִין לְהוֹדוֹת, לְהִלֵּל, לְשַׁבַּח, לְפָאֵר, לְרוֹמֵם, לְהַדְרֵה, לְבָרֵךְ, לְעַלֵּה, וּלְקַלֵּם, לְמִי שֶׁעָשָׂה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ אֶת כָּל הַנִּסִּים הָאֵלֶּה ...

just telling the story. but reliving the story of our Exodus.

You'll notice that this word, vē-higgadta, has at its root, *h-g-d*, which is the word for Haggadah.

- We call it a "Haggadah"

Spelling

Haggadah

[No reference information]

Highgate

[No reference information]

of our fulfilment of this

3. Rambam, M.T. Laws of Hametz & Matzah 7:1

It is a positive Biblical commandment to relate the miracles and wonders wrought for our ancestors in Egypt on the night of the fifteenth of Nisan, as it states: “Remember this day on which you left Egypt” just as it states: “Remember the Shabbat day.” From where do we derive that it must be the night of the fifteenth? As it teaches, “You shall tell your child on that day, saying, it is because of this” – when *matzah* and *maror* are placed before you.

3. משנה תורה לרמב"ם הלכות חמץ ומצה פרק ז' הלכה א'

מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה לְסַפֵּר בְּנִסִּים וּנְפִלְאוֹת שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיִל חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בְּנִסְיָן, שְׁנֵאָמַר "זְכוֹר אֶת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאתֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם" כְּמוֹ שְׁנֵאָמַר "זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת". וּמִנֵּין שֶׁבַּלַּיִל חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר? תְּלִמוּד לֹאמַר "וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה" – בְּשַׁעַה שִׁישׁ מִצָּה וּמְרוֹר מְנַחִים לְפָנֶיךָ.

II. Alternative Obligations

4. Exodus 12 (Parashat Bo)

²⁵And when you enter the land that the Lord will give you, as promised, you shall observe this rite. ²⁶And when your children ask you, ‘What do you mean by this rite?’ ²⁷you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when smiting the Egyptians, but saved our houses.’ Those assembled then bowed low in homage.

5. Exodus 13 (Parashat Bo)

¹¹“And when the Lord has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, as [God] swore to you and to your fathers, and has given it to you, ¹²you shall set apart for the Lord every first issue of the womb: every male firstling that your cattle drop shall be the Lord’s. ¹³But every firstling donkey you shall redeem with a sheep; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. And you must redeem every male first-born among your children. ¹⁴And when, in time to come, a child of yours asks you, saying, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall reply, ‘It was with a mighty hand that the Lord brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage. ¹⁵When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord slew every [male] first-born in the land of Egypt, the first-born of both human and beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the Lord every first male issue of the womb but redeem every male first-born among my children.’

6. Deuteronomy 6 (Parashat Vaethanan)

²⁰When, in time to come, your children ask you, “What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that the Lord our God has enjoined upon you?” ²¹you shall say to your children, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand.

III. The Meaning of h-g-d

7. Exodus 19:3 (Parashat Yitro)

and Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel:

4. ספר שמות פרק י"ב (פרשת בא)

כֹּה וְהָיָה כִּי־תָבֹאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן ה' לָכֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר וְשִׁמְרֶתֶם אֶת־הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת: כִּי וְהָיָה כִּי־יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם מַה הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם: כִּי וְאָמַרְתֶּם זִבְחַת־פֶּסַח הוּא לַה' אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל־בֵּיתִי בְּנִי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּנִגְפוֹ אֶת־מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־בְּתִינֹנוּ הַיְצִיל וַיִּקַּד הָעָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ:

5. ספר שמות פרק י"ג (פרשת בא)

יֵא וְהָיָה כִּי־יָבֹאךָ ה' אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי כְּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְךָ וּלְאֲבֹתֶיךָ וְנִתְּנָה לְךָ: יב וְהָעֲבֹרָת כָּל־פֶּטֶר־רַחֵם לַה' וְכָל־פֶּטֶר וּשְׂגִיר בַּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה לְךָ הַזְּכָרִים לַה': יג וְכָל־פֶּטֶר חֲמוֹר תִּפְדֶּה בַשֶּׂה וְאִם־לֹא תִפְדֶּה וְעִרְפָתוֹ וְכָל בְּכוֹר אָדָם בְּבִנְיֶיךָ תִפְדֶּה: יד וְהָיָה כִּי־יִשְׁאַלְךָ בְּנֶךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מַה־זֹּאת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים: טו וַיְהִי כִּי־הִקְשָׁה פְרַעֲוֹה לְשַׁלְּחֵנוּ וַיְהִי ה' כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר אָדָם וְעַד־בְּכוֹר בַּהֵמָה עַל־כֵּן אֲנִי זִבַּח לַה' כָּל־פֶּטֶר רַחֵם הַזְּכָרִים וְכָל־בְּכוֹר בְּנֵי אִפְדָּה:

6. ספר דברים פרק ו' (פרשת ואתחנן)

כ כִּי־יִשְׁאַלְךָ בְּנֶךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מַה הָעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵתְכֶם: כא וְאָמַרְתָּ לְבְנֶיךָ עַבְדִּים הָיִינוּ לְפַרְעֹה בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה:

7. ספר שמות פרק י"ט פסוק ג' (פרשת יתרו)

וּמוֹשֶׁה עָלָה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו ה' מִן־הַהָר לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

8. Rashi, Ibid.

“To the house of Jacob” – this refers to the women, to whom you should speak in gentle language.

“And declare to the children of Israel” – explain to the men the punishments and details of the commandments in words that are as hard as wormwood (*gidin*).

“לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב” – אֵלֹהֵי הַנָּשִׁים, תֹּאמַר לָהֶן בְּלִשׁוֹן רַחֵם:
 “וְתִגִּיד לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל” – עֲנֹשׁוּן וְדַקְדּוּקִים פָּרַשׁ לְזִכְרוֹנֵי, דְּבָרִים
 הַקָּשׁוּן בְּגִידִין:

9. Genesis 3 (*Parashat Bereishit*)

⁹The Lord God called out to the Human and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰He replied, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” ¹¹“Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat?”

9. ספר בראשית פרק ג' (פרשת בראשית)

ט וַיִּקְרָא ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶל-הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵיכָה: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-קִלְכֶּךָ
 שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּגֶן וָאִירָא כִּי-עֵרָם אֲנִי וְאָחַבְתִּי: יָא וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הִגִּיד לְךָ
 כִּי עֵרָם אֶתֶּה הַמִּזְהָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לְבַלְתִּי אֲכַל-מִמֶּנּוּ
 אֲכַלְתָּ:

10. Leviticus 5:1 (*Parashat Vayikra*)

If a person incurs guilt—When one has heard a public curse but (although able to testify as having either seen or learned of the matter) has not given information and thus is subject to punishment;

10. ספר ויקרא פרק ה' פסוק א' (פרשת ויקרא)

וּנִפְשׁ כִּי-תִחַטָּא וְשָׁמְעָה קוֹל אֱלֹהִים וְהוּא עֵד אוֹ רֹאֶה אוֹ יָדַע אִם-
 לוֹא יִגִּיד וְנִשְׂא עוֹנוֹ:

11. Yoma 74a

It is different there, as the verse states “If he has not given information,” but this person cannot ever give testimony.

11. תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא דף ע"ד עמוד א'

שְׂאֵנִי הֵתָם דְּאָמַר קְרָא: “אִם לֹא יִגִּיד”, וְהָאִי לָאוּ בְּרַ הִגְדָּה הוּא
 בְּלָל.

12. Rambam, *Sefer ha-Mitzvot, Positive Mitzvah* 178

It is that we are commanded to testify before judges regarding any information we might have. ... A proof to the obligation of giving testimony (*haggadat ha-ēdut*) ...

12. ספר המצוות לרמב"ם, מצוות עשה קע"ח

היא שצונו להעיד בבית דין בכל מה שנדעו. ... והנה הביאו
 ראיה על חוב הגדת העדות ...

13. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Seder Night, An Exalted Evening* (ed. Rabbi Menachem D. Genack), p. 4

The *Seder* night is not simply the retelling of an event that occurred in antiquity, but the personal re-experiencing of the event. This concept observed Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, is implicit in the very word “Haggadah” – which can be seen from the phrase “*haggadat edut*,” a declaration of testimony. One of the basic principles of the law of evidence is that hearsay, testimony known only to the witness through someone else, is not admissible evidence. In this vein, the Haggadah emphasizes that “a person is obligated to see himself as if he personally left Egypt.” Accordingly, the *mitzvah* of retelling the story of the Exodus cannot be a mere recounting of the chronicle of a historical event. It must be first-hand testimony, an acknowledgement of an event that is in the actual realm of experience of the testifying individual.