

Embracing the Stranger

<p>Passover Haggadah 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.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">הגדה של פסח: הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים. כל דכפין ייתי ויכול, כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח. השתא הכא, לשנה הבאה בארעא דישראל, השתא עבדי, לשנה הבאה בני חורין.</p>	(1)
<p>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.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">אלפא ביתא דבן סירא: כל דכפין: לעולם יהי שלחנך פרוס לכל מי שיבא ותהא ראוי שתשרה שכינה עליך</p>	(2)
<p>Points for discussion: The haggadah is concerned that we leave room at our table for those in need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you seen this custom observed regarding the Passover seder? • As per the commentary, how might this be extended to other times as well? • How do you feel about inviting strangers into such a family-oriented context? 		
<p>Exodus 23:9 (9) You shall not pressure strangers, for you know the being of the stranger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">שמות פרק כג (ט) וגר לא תלחץ ואתם ידעתם את נפש הגר כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים:</p>	(3)
<p>Leviticus 19:33-34 (33) When a stranger lives with you in your land, you shall not torture them. (34) 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.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">ויקרא פרק יט (לג) וכי יגור אתך גר בארצכם לא תונו אתו: (לד) כאזרח מכם יהיה לכם הגר הגר אתכם ואהבת לו כמוך כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים אני יקוק אלקיכם:</p>	(4)
<p>Rashi on Leviticus 19:34 (34) For you were slaves: A blemish that you possess, you should not point out in your friend.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">רש"י ויקרא פרק יט פסוק לד (לד) כי גרים הייתם: מום שבך אל תאמר לחברך:</p>	(5)
<p>Deuteronomy 10:19 (19) And you should love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">דברים פרק י (יט) ואהבתם את הגר כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים:</p>	(6)
<p>Points for discussion: The above is a sampling of the many biblical texts dealing with strangers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you personally relate to the Jewish communal experience of slavery? How? • Why do you think that the Bible uses the language of loving the stranger? 		

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.

ויקרא רבה פרשת צו פרשה ט
מעשה ברבי ינאי שהיה מהלך בדרך וראה אדם אחד שהיה משופע ביותר א"ל משגח רבי מתקבלא גבן אמר לו אין הכניסו לביתו האכילו והשקהו בדקו במקרא ולא מצאו במשנה ולא מצאו באגדה ולא מצאו בתלמוד ולא מצאו א"ל סב בריך א"ל יברך ינאי בביתיה א"ל אית בך אמר מה דאנא אמר לך א"ל אין א"ל אמור אכול כלבא פיסתיא דינאי קם תפסיה א"ל ירותתי גבך דאת מונע לי א"ל ומה ירתותך גבי א"ל חד זמן הוינא עבר קמי בית ספרא ושמעית קלהון דמניקיא אמרין (דברים לג) תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב מורשה קהלת ינאי אין כתיב כאן אלא קהלת יעקב:

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?