

Making Pesach Personal

As we reach the end of the Maggid section of the Haggadah, we read one of the key lines in the observance of the Pesach seder: שְׁנֵאֹמַר: בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם, שְׁנֵאֹמַר: "In each and every generation a person must see themselves as if they personally left Egypt. As it says 'And you shall tell your child on that day, saying, 'For the sake of this, God **did for me** when I went out of Egypt.'"

We are each meant to feel that Hashem took us out of bondage individually. The mitzvah of Maggid is not just to relay an accounting of the historical events of the exodus from Egypt, but to communicate to our children our conviction that those events have implications for us and our lives today. The story of *yetziat mitzrayim* is our own story; it belongs to each and every one of us.

As we prepare to fulfill the mitzvah of "you shall tell your child," it behooves each of us to consider how we make space for God in our families' lives. How do we continue to feel that God is caring for each of us? How do we convey that in our homes? The notion of developing one's own relationship with God needs to be at the core of Jewish education today. We need to ensure that we are helping our children establish and cultivate the feeling that God is actively involved in their lives. Their understanding of God must mature as they grow.

In order for each person to be able to ultimately say "God did this for me," they must be given the opportunity to examine the world independently and come to personal conclusions about God's impact on their paths. The way that one person frames God will be different from the way another envisions the Divine. As young people confront challenges, we want them to feel that they can turn to Hashem, and we have to provide multiple pathways for them to do so. Sometimes, the way we teach text can create obstacles to creativity and innovation. Hashem is not just in the Torah we learn, but is also in the places we visit, the older people we speak with and in creative forms of art and music.

The work of *v'higaddeta* is to assist the next generation in constructing ways to see God's manifestation in and relevance to their lives. Rabbi Reuven Sasson suggests that we can draw on the experience of the Exodus and connect it to our present day lives by expanding the definition of *mitzrayim*, Egypt. The word *mitzrayim* has the meaning of narrow, constricted and entrapped. Each of us battles a personal *mitzrayim* that shackles us, that holds us back, and keeps us down. Young people can often feel constricted and trapped in ways that confine and choke their potential. Children can be educated to apply God-driven values in their decision making, which can help "free" them from their personal Egypts. If students can see a connection to Hashem as useful and important in that struggle, they can come to feel a sense not only that "God **did** for the Jewish people," but that "God **does for me**."

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