



The Hope-Giver Theme

The Exodus has given hope to generations—and this year, at our Seder, we need to give hope to ourselves.

Over three thousand years ago, a group of people, enslaved for generations, lost hope of ever being free. No slave had ever escaped from Egypt, and the Jewish slaves had given up calling out for help. When Moses promised them freedom, they couldn't even listen. Yet, just one year later, this powerless group had awakened, challenged the world's strongest leader, and emerged triumphant.

This outlandishly radical, impossible story of success is a paradigm of hope that has inspired people of all faiths and nationalities throughout the centuries.

Hope is the most precious gift that exists. The mystics would say that our soul is hardwired for hope. We surely feel better about ourselves and others when hope fills our being. Yet hope withers easily in the face of disappointment and hardship. We are afraid that our dreams will lead to disappointment, and it is all too easy to become disillusioned toxic cynics who ridicule optimists and visionaries. The hopeless state drains the light of our eyes and the health of our bodies.

Then comes the Passover Seder, the antidote to hopelessness. The Exodus story is an overcoming of impossible odds, a triumph over all-powerful enemies. Reliving the Exodus gives us the will and strength to hope once again, to rediscover our vision of a better world, and a better “me.”

Hope is the gift the Jews have given to the world, and hope is the most important gift we can give each other during our Seder. By reliving the haggadah, we refill our hope-tanks with strong fuel from the deepest reservoirs.

To begin the refueling, we have designated fifteen questions as Hope-Givers. Each one gives us the opportunity to let go of our disappointments and to discover the resolve we need to take our next positive steps.

Though we are no longer slaves, we each remain stuck in some part of our lives. The Passover Seder is a de-stuckifying experience.

This is not always easy. Getting unstuck—making changes—is scary and can overwhelm us. It makes us venture into the unknown and take risks. We may fail; we may wander for years in the desert. Toddlers don't begin walking without falling hard and often. But they don't stay down; they get up and move forward.

Hope is the springboard for our next steps. We need to replenish our personal hope-tanks, to bond with kindred supportive spirits, to embrace the challenge of changing ourselves and the world. Hope has been the soul of the Jewish People for over three thousand years. Moses said to Pharaoh, “Let my People go!” We have to ingest these words anew every year, in order to strengthen ourselves and to overcome the fear of the unknown, to march forward, slowly but defiantly, toward the Promised Land.

THE HAGGADAH: Pre-Seder Check-in

(Write your answers in the circles.)

Where are you (ayeka) regarding the Passover Seder this year?

What are you excited about for this Seder?

What would you hope to happen for yourself and others at the Seder?