

THE BIG MIRROR!

by Rabbi Label Lam

*In each and every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he had gone out of Egypt.
(Haggadah)*

This seems to be a tall order. How exactly is everyone in every generation to fulfill their obligation to see themselves as if they had exited Egypt? I don't know if he meant it as a joke or not but someone told me about a person who would hang a mirror at each "door" in the house at Pesach time because of the requirement, "B'kol dor v'dor- in each and every generation" a person is obligated to see himself..." Beyond the feeble pun there may just be something to this practice. In a certain way the Haggadah is a sort of mirror. How so?

A good number of years ago I was on my way to Seattle Washington from New York and along the way I needed to change planes in St. Louis. On the second half of the flight there was a whole new crowd of people. I saw an American Indian. I don't think I ever really saw someone quite like that before in my life, and I'm sure I looked a little odd to everyone else. Now in my new seat I was engrossed in reading through and highlighting a Hebrew Tanach (Bible), and I was minding my own business diligently. A seat away from me a middle aged woman was shooting glances in my direction and I knew what was about to happen. I was ready. She asked with extra caution, "Can I ask you a question?" I told her plainly, "You just did!" She begged again, "Can I ask you another question?" I told her, "You just did again!" Then she blurted, "OK. I just want to ask you something. Are you Amish?" I told her blankly, "No! Amish people don't fly on planes." To which she immediately said, "I'm sorry!" I told her nicely, "You don't have to apologize to me. Apologize to all the Amish people." After that encounter she withdrew to her book and I to mine but I knew she wasn't through. Twenty minutes later she asked the magic question, "What are you?" I told her proudly, "I am a Jew!" She thought for a few minutes and after the pause asked sincerely, "What do you people believe?" I squared off now in her direction. This required a serious response. I replied with dramatic wonderment, "Believe? What do we believe? We are, the children of Abraham Isaac and Jacob who were taken out of old Egypt with great signs and wonders and who heard The Almighty speak to them on Mount Sinai more than three thousand three hundred years ago!" The rest of the flight there was respectful silence and although I knew and understood well what I had said, it began to take root in my being the magnitude of the seat I-we claim we occupy.

On Pesach night at the Seder, we reach as it were a "look-out point" on our travels through history and from there we can see the entire past and the future in one magnificent sweep. In our homes in

our individual seats in every generation without a notice from the Synagogue and without a central planning committee and in spite of the lack of one, on "this night" again and again we open up the Haggadah as if the orchestra leader has just given the signal with a tap of His baton. Then separate but together we peak back at the roots of national existence, to Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. We refer strongly and repeatedly to the promises of protection and guidance through the gauntlet of history. The flow of those promises climb up as through the veins of a huge tree generation after generation. We can only hope we may be washed over and watched over by them till the inertia of that surge propels us ever closer to our destiny. In the end we give a heart-felt shout, "Next year in Jerusalem!" What a journey!

In that way the Haggadah is like a mirror. The deeper we are able to view the images in the mirror of history the further we are actually gazing into our future. Rabbi Eliahu Lopian ztl. had observed that the soul is sensitive like an eye. If one small particle of filth comes in contact with the eye it closes up. Perhaps that's why we try to create a sterile, "chometz free zone" so the soul can open wide to catch this grand sweeping overview of history. What happens if there is a drop of the forbidden that affects the eye and causes it to close? How tragic is that!? When the eye closes it sees nothing and experiences only the feelings of self. It's as if one looks at this deep mirror of the Haggadah and sees only his or her self. They miss the big picture. That's what a drop of chometz and a chometz-attitude can do. Sure in each and every generation we have to see ourselves but we have to see more than ourselves; how we look inside **the big mirror**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.