

## Why Does Moses Disappear on Passover?

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At sundown on April 12, after Shabbat, Jews worldwide will begin celebrating the festival of Passover. (Jewish holidays begin in the evening. Outside of Israel, the first two days of the holiday begin with a Seder. In Israel, the indigenous home of the Jewish people, there is only one Seder.

During the Seder, we tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. But the Haggadah, the book that acts as the script for the Seder, only mentions Moses once. **Only once?** The key human figure in the biblical Exodus story?

Yes, **THAT Moses**... Prophet, miracle deliverer, G-d's right-hand man, mountain climber, former tennis player, and a prince of Egypt. Former tennis player? Absolutely! The Torah says Moses served in the courts of Pharaoh.

Much of the Haggadah was put together by Rabbis after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. It was created so Jews would have a guideline for the Passover Seders and to fulfill the Torah commandment to remember that G-d took our ancestors out of Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm.

Before the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, a big part of the holiday ritual was animal sacrifices as required by the Torah. But those sacrifices were only allowed at the Beit Mikdash (Holy Temple atop the Temple Mount). Sacrifices ended with the Temple's destruction. Well, either the destruction of the Beit Mikdash or an anticipation that PETA would be created in the future.

By the way, nothing in the Torah or Haggadah says that after the festival ends, Jews must have a week of leftover brisket after Passover. Sadly, it happens anyway.

During that long wilderness walk, Jews began a tradition that still exists today, complaining about the food during a trip. Oy, the complaints! Can you imagine what nonsense poor Moses had to deal with? **They complained about the food received directly from G-d.** Come folks! When G-d sends you food (manna), you don't run up to your leader and say, "Hey Moses, what is this crap?"

At age 80, when most people are sitting on their front porches yelling at kids to get off their lawn, poor Moses is stuck with newly freed stiff-necked people whining and gets no recognition from the Haggadah builders.

Now I understand it wasn't in Moses' nature to complain; the Torah should take advantage of his humility and only mention him once in the Seder.

Almost totally leaving Moses out of the Haggadah was not a biblical command. Nowhere in the book of Exodus does it say, "Thus sayeth the Lord, when you remember this day, 'ixnay on the osesmay.' The fundamental omission of Moses was a man-made, rabbinical decision.

Those Haggadah-compiling Rabbis decided not to honor Moses, the guy who led the nascent Jews out of Egypt. Moses begged G-d to forgive the freed slaves every time they screwed up, which happened often. Instead of Moses, they honored Elijah- a prophet and a sourpuss. In chapter 19 of the book of Kings, G-d has to convince Elijah to return to his Prophet job. But instead, the prophet displayed righteous indignation. The grouchy prophet could not accept that the Israelites were humans and had faults. Heck, Elijah was nicer to a juniper tree than the Israelites.

G-d helped Elijah convince the Israelites of his omnipotence by sending down fire to consume an offering when the priests of the fake god Baal failed. On the other hand, the Lord helped Moses convince Pharaoh to release the Hebrew slaves with ten plagues. And when Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army to attack the former slaves, the Big Guy gave Moses the power to split an entire sea so they could escape the army.

I'm sorry, but in my humble opinion, Moses should be in the Haggadah because when it comes to miracles, he wins. And don't forget, the story of **G-d's miracles to free us from slavery is what the Seder and Haggadah is all about.** That alone should ensure Moses gets honored. But Moses gets nothing. Would they do a Batman movie without the caped crusader?

Oh. You should know that it's not a commandment that Jews have ten boxes of matzo left over after Passover ends. That's just tradition.

Near the end of the Seder, a glass of wine is poured, the front door is opened, and an ancient prophet is invited to parch his thirst with a glass of wine. Moses? Nope. Once again, Mr. "Ride a Flaming Chariot to Heaven" is selected for the Seder. By the way, Elijah took that fiery ride in front of his student, Elisha. Personally, I prefer Elisha to his teacher Elijah. Elisha knew what to do when bald people like me get mocked.

When Moses was 120 years old, just when he finally gets the Jews close to their destination he was replaced by a younger guy, Joshua (who was a young 90). G-d tells Moses he can't enter the holy land, the indigenous home of the freed Jews. The poor guy never got to enter Israel and taste falafel, some good hummus, Golda ice cream, or even revel in a look at the beautiful Sea of Galilee while dining at my favorite Chinese restaurant, Pagoda in Tiberias.

And guess what? It isn't just Passover. At every bris (ritual circumcision), the child's parents put out an extra chair for Elijah! So, while the guy who wouldn't pray for the Jewish people gets wine on Passover AND gets bagels and whitefish every bris...Moses gets bupkis.

Moses gets nothing, but the Jewish people get something---meaningful Seders filled with family stories, questions and learning, and of course lots of food. May you and everyone at every Seder be blessed by G-d, and have a Chag Pesach Samayach - Happy Passover Holiday.