

ASK THE RABBI

Question: Why does the Pesach seder take so long? Why can't we eat first and talk after?

Answer: This is a great question. If we look through the hagadah, we'll see that to read the hagadah straight through with no breaks would only take about 30 minutes. So why does the seder take so long?

There are many mitzvot that we observe on seder night, but the main one is telling the story of Egypt. As we know we can tell the story in pretty short order, but the mitzvah is tell it in as much detail as possible. Therefore the telling takes time. There are also some very specific points that our Rabbis wanted us to mention about the story, and therefore we read a lot from the hagadah itself.

Add to the detailed story telling are the mitzvot we do, Kiddush, two different washings, the four cups, matzah, marror, the "Hillel Sandwich," and Hallel, and you have a lot of side activities happening that take time.

One last point to keep in mind is that we can't start the seder until the stars come out, which is usually around 8-8:30 PM. A late start, a detailed story, plenty of side activities all add up to a long and late night.

I'd like to add one suggestion. Instead of staring at your watch and wondering when dinner will start, take our Sages advice, don't be a passive participant in the story, re-experience the story as it happens. Envision yourself as the Jew leaving Egypt. It will add an entirely new dimension to your seder experience.

