The Ethics of Inclusion: 
The גר and the אזרח in the 
Passover to Yhwh

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When Yhwh instructs Moses on how the Israelites are to keep the Passover to Yhwh in Exod 12, Yhwh commands the inclusion of the גר in the cultic celebration. This article explores the ethical dimensions of this instruction, identifying two cooperating ethical principles—the Golden Rule analogy and the imitation of God. The Passover to Yhwh in Exod 12 encourages Israel to recall and reflect on their experience as גרים in Egypt and to imitate the divine patronage of Yhwh toward those who live as dependents among them.

Key Words: ethics, imitation of God, Golden Rule, Passover

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have long explored the moral dimensions of social justice in the Hebrew Bible.1 Within this discussion, the גר (variously translated “[resident] alien,” “sojourner,” “stranger,” “foreigner” and “non-indigenous resident”)2 is one among many social subsets in Israelite society about


whom concern for their socioeconomic vulnerability is prominent in the legal and prophetic texts. According to Harold Bennett, however, moral concerns are not always at the root of texts in the Hebrew Bible putatively promoting the cause of the underprivileged, and many of the texts concerning the גֵּר ultimately serve a radically different purpose. Granting that sociopolitical interests, or “ideologies,” play a role in the development of the biblical literature, Walter Houston counters that “knowing the social roots of the Bible’s ideas and language of social theology and morality and the social ends which they serve enables us to discriminate among them, and to recognize those with roots deeper than the needs of the moment and the interests of the hegemonic class. These cannot be falsified by the uses to which they are put.” Regardless of whether or not social policy in the Hebrew Bible perfectly embodies the moral causes it champions or whether those in power in ancient Israel were truly committed to those causes, this instruction remains a valuable window into the ancient past of Israel’s moral reflection and a stimulus to moral thinking among communities of faith in our contemporary world.

In this article, I argue that there is a moral dimension to the inclusion of the גֵּר in the Passover to Yhwh in the instructions and larger narrative of the book of Exodus and the Pentateuch more generally. The legal instructions concerning this matter appear twice in the Pentateuch: first in Exod 12 where the instructions for the ritual are initially laid out and second in Num 9 where further instructions are provided for individuals who, for certain legitimate reasons, were unable to participate in the ritual at the appointed time. Each text sets forth the principle that a single legal standard applies to both the גֵּר and theنبור. This notion appears six times in the Hebrew Bible, loosely formulated as “There shall be one legal standard (תורה/משׁפט/חקה) for the גֵּר and theنبור” (Exod 12:49; Lev 24:22; Num 9:14; 15:15–16, 29). All of these texts belong to the Priestly strata of the Pentateuch, specifically the Holiness stratum (H), which is prominent in Lev 17–26 and scattered elsewhere throughout the Pentateuch. Within H, the גֵּר has a unique legal status when compared with theGBK legislation found in the other legal collections of the Pentateuch (the Covenant Collec-

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1999); M. Zehnder, Umgang mit Fremden in Israel und Assyrien: Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie des >Fremden< im Licht Antiker Quellen (BWANT 8; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005).

3. Kidd divides the pentateuchal גֵּר legislation into two groups: “(1) laws addressed to the Israelites for the protection of the גֵּר, and (2) laws compulsory for both Israelite and גֵּר, in order to preserve the holiness of the community” (Alterity and Identity, 130).


tation in Exod 20:23–23:19 and Deut 6–26). While it is widely accepted that H postdates the other strata of Priestly material, the relative dating of this material, particularly its relationship to Deuteronomy, remains a matter of debate. For our purposes, it is important to recognize that these laws belong to a historical period in Israel later than the historical setting of the narrative context, at a time when Israel is in actual possession of the land of Israel and when the distinction between the גֶּר and the אָבִּיאַר is socially established. Furthermore, the specific aims and theology of H will help illuminate the ethical motivations involved in Exod 12.

Before proceeding, it will be helpful to outline the semantic significance of the terms גֶּר and אָבִּיאַר in the Hebrew Bible. According to HALOT, the גֶּר “is a man who (alone or with his family) leaves village and tribe because of war 2S 4:3 Is 16:4, famine Ru 1:1, epidemic, blood guilt etc. and seeks shelter and residence at another place, where his right of landed property, marriage and taking part in jurisdiction, cult and war has been curtailed.” Of the three verses cited in this definition, all three employ the verb גֹּר, not the noun גֶּר. José Kidd observes five significant differences between the use of these two terms: While the verb גֹּר is a non-legal term with a “transit” and an “emigrant” character, used primarily of Israelites and with various synonyms, the noun גֶּר is a legal term with a “punctual” and an “immigrant” character, used primarily of non-Israelites with no true synonyms. With these differences in mind, Kidd acknowledges the likely derivation of the noun גֶּר from the verb גֹּר but recognizes its independent semantic evolution as a legal term to which changing historical circumstances gave rise.

The companion term, אָבִּיאַר, only appears in the Hebrew Bible in contradistinction to the term גֶּר. According to Num 9:14, the אָבִּיאַר is connected

7. “The peculiar status accorded to the גֶּר in priestly legislation derives from the priestly theology and world-view, not from changed historical conditions or from a different meaning of the term גֶּר” (J. Joosten, People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Frameworks of the Law in Leviticus 17–26 (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 57–58. See also Kidd, Alterity and Identity, 56–60.


9. “[Leviticus 19:34 and 25:23] sound a critical note on land ownership and the buying and selling of real estate, which would not make sense to people who are not landowners” (Joosten, People and Land, 59). One of the fundamental differences between the גֶּר and the אָבִּיאַר is the possession of land, a concern foreign to the wilderness generation that is comprised not of the גֶּר and the אָבִּיאַר but of “the sons of Israel” (ברי הָאָדָם) and a “mixed multitude” (וּם עֲדֵי, Exod 12:37–38) or the “sons of Israel” and “a rabble” (עַם וּנְבָדָא; Num 11:4).


12. If one does not choose to emend אָבִּיאַר with אֵרֶץ per BHS and HALOT, Ps 35:37 would be the sole exception. Still, it seems likely that the appearance of the word in the psalm would derive its significance from the appearance of the word in our texts, not vice versa.
with the land (הארץ), while in Num 15:29 the term refers specifically to “the sons of Israel” (בני ישראל). The term is omitted in Num 15:15–16 and replaced with “you” (לכם), the addressee of the legislation. This helps to establish the generally Israelite character of the הוהי against the generally non-Israelite character of the גוי.

**THE PASSOVER TO YHWH IN EXODUS 12:1–13, 43–49**

The instructions for the Passover to Yhwh are interwoven in the Exodus narrative with the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the consecration of the firstborn (12:1–13:16), all of which find their liturgical and theological basis in the narrative events surrounding the tenth plague (12:24–27; 13:8–10, 14–16; and the literary context: 11:1–10; 12:29–42, 51). The text is a coherent whole, in spite of its redactional character. Below, I will propose a reading of the text that is rooted in the coherence of the story, but first I will address the redactional “bumps” within the text. Acknowledging these bumps at the outset is a preliminary step to appreciating the significance of the coherence of the text.

**Literary and Historical Analysis**

Exodus 12:1–20, 43–47 and 13:1–2 present themselves as the words of Yhwh to Moses and Aaron concerning the newly inaugurated ritual of the Passover to Yhwh (12:1–13; 43–47), the Feast of Unleavened Bread (12:14–20), and the consecration of the firstborn (13:1–2), while Exod 12:21–27 and 13:3–16 present themselves as the words of Moses to the elders of Israel.

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13. “A fact of central importance for the exegesis of H is that its audience are the Israelites” (Joosten, *People and Land*, 29; see also pp. 35–36). Joosten describes the גוי as one among many individuals “indirectly addressed” by the so-called Holiness Code. See pp. 54–79.

14. Where Israelites are identified as גויים, Kidd distinguishes this use of the word as a “figura theologica,” and he recognizes that it is conceptually dependent on the texts in which the גוי is a non-Israelite (*Alterity and Identity*, 85–108).

15. My use of the term coherence reflects the way it is developed by Mark Zvi Brettler: “Coherence . . . [has] no bearing on the unity of [a] book. Unity is a compositional, authorial notion; coherence depends on readers. . . . A redactor might try to bring material together in a fashion that minimizes disjunctures. If he did so perfectly, he would ‘disappear,’ and we would think that the text is unified rather than a redacted, composite text. However, biblical redactors do not disappear; they do not typically remove (all) doublets, contradictions, stylistic differences and other ‘bumps.’” In applying this discussion to the book of Judges, Brettler concludes “The editors have not created a compositional unity, though the book does cohere” (“The ‘Coherence’ of Ancient Texts,” in *Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern and Other Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch* [ed. J. Stackert, B. N. Porter, and D. P. Wright; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2010] 418). Likewise, I do not believe that the text we have before us is best understood as a compositional unity, though I do believe it is meaningful to recognize that it does cohere, as I will demonstrate.

16. “Even if one is bound to account for the final form of a given text, one cannot escape the necessity of studying its background and genesis so as to be able to provide such an explanation. Indeed, the diachronic analysis of a text is indispensable, and it should lead to a better synchronic understanding of it” (A. J. Fendoza, *Pre-Exilic Israel, the Hebrew Bible, and Archaeology: Integrating Text and Artefact* [LHBOTS 549; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2011] 64).
people (respectively) relaying Yhwh’s instructions. Upon a close reading of the text, one observes an imbalance between divine command and human instruction. Yhwh commands things that Moses does not relay to the people, and Moses instructs the people in things that Yhwh does not command. Elsewhere in the book of Exodus, much space is devoted to balancing Yhwh’s instructions for the tabernacle (chs. 25–31) with the implementation of those instructions (chs. 35–39). If interpreters are right to conclude that this repetition communicates “the importance of obedience to the divine command,” then this logic requires an alternative explanation for the degree to which the divine command and human instruction/implementation does not correspond with regard to the Passover.

Yhwh’s instructions (12:1–13) emphasize calendrical concerns (vv. 2–3, 6), regulations concerning the Passover animal (ןֵשׁ) including the precise time of slaughter (v. 6), prescribed and proscribed manners of preparation and cooking (vv. 8–9), the duration of consumption (v. 10), and concerns for what remains after the feast (v. 11). These instructions are not repeated when Moses instructs “all the elders of Israel.” Rather, Moses’ instructions (12:21–27) concern the manner in which the blood is to be applied to the lintel and doorposts (v. 22a), the proscription not to go out of the house (v. 22b), and prescriptions for communicating to future generations the significance of the Passover to Yhwh (vv. 24–27). None of this did Yhwh command Moses. Verse 28 summarily states Israel’s obedience to what “Yhwh commanded Moses and Aaron.” This statement implies that what Yhwh commanded Moses and Aaron conformed to what Moses instructed the elders of Israel to do, helping create a sense of coherence between 12:1–13 and 12:21–27.

Exodus 12:43–49 contains further instructions from Yhwh to Moses and Aaron concerning the Passover. These instructions largely concern who is permitted to participate and prohibited from participating in the Passover, with emphasis placed on circumcision as a stipulation for participation (vv. 44, 48) and the inclusion of the (circumcised) (וֹרֵחַ) (vv. 48–49; cf. Num 9:14). Also included are two additional proscriptions. The first (v. 46aβ) conflates a concern in Yhwh’s instructions to Moses (v. 10a) with Moses’ instructions to the elders of Israel (v. 22b). The second (v. 46b) provides an additional stipulation concerning the preparation of the Passover animal.

17. Thomas Dozeman sees Exod 35–Num 10 as the counterpart to Exod 25–31, fulfilling not only the revealed design but also its revealed purpose (Exod 25:8–9) which requires “the institution of the cult . . . the ordination of the priesthood in Leviticus, [and] the formation of the camp in Numbers 1–10” (Commentary on Exodus [Eerdmans Critical Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009] 601–3).
19. This reflects something taken for granted in Yhwh’s instructions concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread (12:19). Unlike 12:48–49, 12:19 does not exhort Israel to include the גַּר in the Feast of Unleavened Bread; rather, it takes for granted that the גַּר belongs to the “congregation of Israel.” And yet, the clarification “whether he is a גַּר or an אָסָי” suggests that this notion of belonging needed to be reinforced, that not all who belonged to the congregation of Israel would have taken this notion for granted.
There is no corresponding section in which Moses relays instructions to the people as there was in the previous section. Rather, the text again summarily states Israel’s obedience to what “Yhwh commanded Moses and Aaron” (v. 50), despite the fact that, barring the instructions in v. 46, the concerns are not suited to the narrative context. The status of this people while residing (גור) in Egypt is elsewhere described in the Hebrew Bible as (גרים; cf. Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19). Whatever distinctions exist between the Israelites and the “mixed multitude” (עַלְוֹתָא) who accompany them, the distinction between the and the would more appropriately distinguish Egyptians from Israelites, not Israelites from those who reside among them. The instructions in this section betray concerns for Passover observance at a time when Israel as narrative audience is rooted in the land and among them dwell various classes of people—“the son of a foreigner” (בן נכר), “the slave” (עבד), “the sojourner” (תושׂב), “the day-laborer” (שׂכיר), and the (גור). Such language would not have been intelligible to the Exodus generation, much less observed. Verse 50, like v. 28, creates a sense of coherence with the larger narrative, but it does not eliminate the redactional bumps of the text. Moreover, it invites a less literal interpretation of v. 28. Verse 51 then resumes and brings closure to the tenth plague narrative (11:1–10; 12:29–42).

In the final analysis, there are multiple literary strata interwoven throughout the text. Yhwh’s instructions to Moses belong to the Priestly strata, likely H, while Moses’ instructions to the people belong to the non-Priestly literary stratum that functions as the narrative core of the book of Exodus. That the Passover to Yhwh is both an ancient Israelite ritual and

20. It is difficult to determine the differences signified by each of these terms. On the one hand, the (son of a) foreigner, the sojourner, and the appear to have similar characteristics (foreign origin and temporary residence), though this legislation allows for the alone to participate in the Passover. In Deut 24:14, the day-laborer is not distinguished from but rather identified among the, and in Mal 3:5, the day-laborer earns himself the same protection provided the widow, fatherless, and . This suggests that these words could signify different classes of people at different times throughout Israel’s history, and/or that these different classes were afforded different privileges depending on time and location. While it seems most reasonable in this context to conclude these are five different classes of people, what distinguished them from one another aside from Passover participation is unclear. For more on this subject, see K. L. Sparks, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), and Zehnder, Umgang, 333–38.


a ritual that developed over time can be reasonably discerned from the text and has positive implications for this study.\(^{23}\)

How then shall we read the final form of the text? Terence Fretheim suggests the text functions as a liturgical narrative that closely identifies God’s liberative activity with Israel’s liturgical expression of it.

A newly liberated people will create practices and institutions that are in tune with their new status. In the case of passover, however, liturgy precedes the liberative event. Redactionally, the ritual is set in place before the event occurs. . . . Story and liturgy have been so integrally interwoven that they cannot be understood properly in isolation from each other. But liturgy has not only shaped literature, it has shaped the event itself. The event takes place according to certain liturgical rubrics. The event is liturgy. Hence the identification of the act of God in the text cannot be narrowly associated with a historical event. Act of God is also a liturgical event. (emphasis original)\(^{24}\)

Recognizing these texts as liturgical in nature provides one possible framework for understanding the complicated textual and historical issues outlined above. By incorporating instructions for a developed ritual observance of the Passover to Yhwh into the etiological narrative of that ritual, the inclusion of the נ in cultic celebration is embedded in and becomes a part of the liberative act of God. God’s liberating activity is not restricted to the event within the text; rather, it is embodied in Israel’s liturgical celebration of that event.

As a liturgical text, many historical questions remain unanswered and require complex investigations of the cultural-anthropological and socio-political dimensions of ancient Israel’s past.\(^{25}\) My investigation, however, is predominantly concerned with the moral and theological dimension of ancient Israel’s cultic reflection. Whatever historical circumstances result in the presence of the נ among the Israelites, it creates a cultic and moral dilemma for a people whose self identity is frequently maintained throughout the Hebrew Bible over and against other nations and peoples (e.g., Lev 20:23–26; Ezra 9–10; Neh 13). From this perspective, the move to incorporate the נ into the cultic life of Israel as an expression of divine


\(^{24}\) Fretheim, Exodus, 137.

\(^{25}\) The three most recent studies of the נ in this vein are van Houten, The Alien; Bultmann, Der Fremde; and Zehnder, Umgang. Kidd’s study is more properly lexical and theological, building on the more historically oriented studies of van Houten and Bultmann: Alterity and Identity, 10–11.
liberation is one of great significance. This study now turns to exploring this significance.

**Ethical and Theological Analysis**

The book of Exodus emphasizes both the ethnic and theological particularity of Israel. The people of Israel are the descendants of their eponymous ancestor, Jacob/Israel. A clear ethnic distinction is drawn between the Egyptians and this people, “the Hebrews” (הָעֵבְרִים). With respect to Yhwh, the “God of the Hebrews” (אֱלֹהֵי העֵבְרִים) who delivers them from Egyptian oppression (3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3), they are a “personal possession from among all the peoples” (19:5a). This narrow vision of the congregation is exclusive to those who stand outside it. Nevertheless, the Exodus tradition contains material suggestive of a more inclusive vision. The Hebrews are not alone on their Exodus journey; they are accompanied by “a mixed multitude” (12:38) and “a rabble” (Num 11:4). These, along with the Israelites, “see the salvation of Yhwh” (Exod 14:13). The “God of the Hebrews” is also the deity who claims a more universal sovereignty: “Indeed, all the earth belongs to me” (19:5b). This deity enjoins Israel to observe the covenant (19:5a) that they might become a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (19:6). The ethnic and theological particularity of Israel cannot be ignored, but it only captures a partial picture of the larger whole. Israel’s particularity does not eliminate the possibility of a more inclusive vision for Israel, whether in makeup or in vocation.

The Covenant Collection in Exodus (20:23–23:19) contains two important legal exhortations relevant to this investigation insofar as they demonstrate one way in which Israel is (not) supposed to interact with the גֵּר.

**Exodus 22:21**

You shall not mistreat גֵּר a גֵּר, and you shall not oppress (נִאַה) him,

for you were גֵּרִים in the land of Egypt.

**Exodus 23:9**

You shall not oppress גֵּר and you shall not oppress גֵּר.

Indeed, you know the psychological experience (מַעַן) of the גֵּר, for you were גֵּרִים in the land of Egypt.

The kind of ethical thinking behind this legislation belongs to the stream of tradition known as the Golden Rule, which appears in the NT (Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31) and elsewhere in other religious traditions. “In the broadest sense, ‘the Golden Rule’ is the notion that one’s own desires can serve, by analogy, as a standard for how one is to treat others. This notion can be formulated either positively or negatively.”26 In this particular iteration of

the Rule, the legal injunctions prohibit a certain kind of negative behavior. In Deuteronomy, a similar notion is expressed positively: “So you shall love the אָרְמָי, because you were אָרְמָי in the land of Egypt” (10:19). Both negative and positive iterations of the Rule are combined in Leviticus: “If a אָרְמָי resides among you in your land, you shall not mistreat (יָרַשׁ, Hiphil) him. The אָרְמָי who resides with you shall be to you like the אֹסֵל among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were אָרְמָי in the land of Egypt—l am Yhwh your God” (19:33–34). The common thread shared by these various iterations is the Golden Rule analogy, “for you were אָרְמָי in the land of Egypt.”

For Kidd, the principle behind the Egypt-Aaron motivational clause (Exod 22:21[20]; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19) should be distinguished from the Egypt-עבד (“slave”) motivational clause (Deut 5:15; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22). He argues that they do not differ in content, as though Israel’s experience as אָרְמָי was positive but their experience in “the house of slavery” (Deut 5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; 13:5, 10) was negative, but rather in their argumentation. I concur with his assessment that the Egypt-עבד clause is based on the principle of gratitude for what Yhwh has done for Israel. However, his understanding of the Egypt-Aaron clause is problematic: “The rationale of this motive clause is based on a principle of reciprocity, i.e. what others have done for Israel: ‘do to the אָרְמָי among you as others did to you when you were אָרְמָי among them.’” According to this logic, Israel’s experience as אָרְמָי must have been positive compared to the negative experience of being slaves in “the house of slavery”—the dichotomy Kidd was attempting to avoid. The clause in Exod 22:21[20] and 23:9, however, recalls the memory of Egypt by the use of the verb “oppress” (חֲלֹם), which harkens back to the description of Israel’s own experience of Egyptian oppression (3:9). If anything, this clause is based on the rejection of reciprocity: “do not do to the אָרְמָי among you as the Egyptians did to you when you were אָרְמָי in Egypt.” In Exod 23:9, the legislation encourages the Israelites to reflect on the psychological experience (שִׁנְפָא) of having endured Egyptian oppression and to consider that the אָרְמָי among them now occupies a similar position of vulnerability within Israel that the Israelites occupied within Egypt. The memory of


27. According to van Houten, the fact that these two prohibitions frame legislation pertaining to the courts (Exod 23:1–9) suggests that the oppression of which they speak is concerned specifically with the courts. “Stated positively, it is claiming that the alien has legal rights and must be accorded a fair hearing” (*The Alien*, 55). If this is the intent of these laws, it becomes more pronounced in H (e.g., Exod 12:48–49; Lev 19:33–34; 24:22; Num 9:14, 15:15–16, 29).

28. Throughout this article, MT versification appears in brackets.


30. Ibid., 89–90.

31. English translations usually render שִׁנְפָא with the English “heart” (KJV, [N]RSV, ESV) or “feelings” (NIV). HALOT describes this particular use of the noun as the “low morale of someone dispirited.” Koehler, Baumgartner, and Stamm, *HALOT*. The English word “psyche” stands in direct continuity both lexicographically and semantically with the LXX ψυχή, hence my rendering, “psychological experience.”
the negative experiences in Egypt provides the analogy on which Israel’s relationship with the ה is built.

What connection exists between this legislation and the Passover to Yhwh earlier in the book of Exodus? Conceptually, the idea that Israel must not oppress the ה is profoundly embodied when they include the ה in the Passover ritual. Israel knows they were not alone in experiencing Yhwh’s salvation from Egyptian oppression, and that their own status among the Egyptians was not entirely unlike the status of the ה who now resides among them. The Israelite who shares the passover with the ה is not likely then to subject that individual to the kinds of oppressive treatment to which they were subjected while in Egypt. The Passover to Yhwh in Exod 12 functions for the OT similarly to that of the Parable of the Good Samaritan in the NT—it exemplifies how those who understand themselves to have a special relationship with God must understand “the other” in light of that special relationship. It is not a license to act unjustly toward them but rather a responsibility to extend to them common fundamental privileges. This is specifically how H understands and interprets the prohibitions from the Covenant Collection.32 “The ה who resides with you shall be to you like the זָרָא among you, and you shall love him as yourself” (Lev 19:34a). The Passover to Yhwh demonstrates that this includes certain privileges that have traditionally been understood as ethnically restricted. “There shall be one cultic instruction (הֹרָה)33 for the זָרָא and for the ה in your midst” (Exod 12:49).

Arguably, another moral impetus is operating alongside the Golden Rule principle, one that stems from the heart of Israel’s faith—the character of Yhwh. The God who hears the outcry (צעקה) of the Israelites (3:9) is the same God who will hear the outcry (צדק) of the widows and fatherless and act on their behalf (22:23[22]). That this God would respond in kind to the outcry of the ה seems a logical inference, particularly in light of the juxtaposition and lexical similarity of the injunctions against the oppression (ינה, Hiphil) of the ה and the oppression (ענה, Piel) of the widows and fatherless. The notion that one ought to imitate God is a fundamental ethical principle in the Hebrew Bible.34 The issue is complex, particularly

32. See the discussion concerning the inner-biblical exegetical activity of H in Lev 19 and Exod 12 in Nihan, From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch, 472–78, esp. pp. 475, and 566–67.
33. For the cultic significance of the term הֹרָה in Priestly literature, see ibid., 265–68.
in this case because one must consider both Yhwh’s universal concerns for all those who experience oppression and Yhwh’s particular concerns for Israel. Is the God of the Exodus narrative acting out of a particular concern for Israel or a more general concern for an oppressed people?

Exodus makes clear that Yhwh acts out of concern for the unrighteousness being committed against his people (Exod 3:7–8). Yhwh is acting on Israel’s behalf in light of a particular shared relationship—Yhwh is Israel’s patron. Elsewhere, the portrayal of Yhwh as the divine King establishes his impartiality and absolute commitment to justice for all who experience oppression (e.g. Ps 72:1–4; 12–14; cf. Deut 10:17–19). This is not, however, the imagery behind the Exodus narrative. Is it therefore absent from the Exodus tradition preserved in ancient Israel? The tension between particularity and universality as it relates to the Exodus tradition is maintained in Amos 9:7–8, where Yhwh, through a series of rhetorical questions, demonstrates that Israel is not the only nation whom Yhwh has “brought up” (העלה, Hiphil; cf. Exod 3:8, 17), presumably from less-than-desirable circumstances. This text places Israel on an equal plane in the divine eye to the other nations, particularly those in her immediate vicinity and with whom she is frequently in conflict—“Are you not like the Cushites to me, O Israel?” Nevertheless, this oracle suggests that Yhwh is committed to Israel in a way not so with the other nations—“Except, I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob.” In Amos, the tradition of the Exodus is complex, asserting both a universal concern for those who experience oppression and Yhwh’s particular commitment to Israel.

One need not read Amos’s tradition into the book of Exodus, positing that Yhwh acted impartially on behalf of the oppressed, in order to construct a positive divine model for Israel to imitate. If we restrict ourselves to the portrayal of Yhwh as the divine patron of Israel, we need only extend the analogy developed earlier—for you were גרי in the land of Egypt—to include the role of Israel as a patron to the גר “who resides among you” (Exod 12:49). Just as Yhwh has delivered Israel (¼רנ) from oppression (¼ר), so also shall Israel protect the גר from oppression (¼רנ). When an Israelite becomes impoverished and dependent on his kinsman, he is to be treated as a גר (Lev 25:35–43). This notion of dependency and patron responsibility between the גר and the Israelite belonged to the cultural environment from which Exod 12 emerged. Moreover, the appeal to the Exodus tradition in Lev 25:38, 42 reinforces the analogy between Yhwh and Israel as protective patrons of those who depend on them.

**Conclusion**

The motivation for the Israelite to include the גר in the Passover to Yhwh stems from two ethical principles—the Golden Rule analogy and the

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imitation of God. On the one hand, Israel once lived as vulnerable dependents in a foreign land where they experienced abuse and oppression. By incorporating the גָּר into the Passover ritual, they could reflect on the fact that the גָּר among them occupies a position similar to their own when they lived in Egypt. On the other hand, Yhwh himself delivered Israel from their oppressive situation because of the special relationship he shared with them. By incorporating the גָּר into the Passover ritual, Israel is able to demonstrate solidarity with their dependents and model the very character of their God, Yhwh. Through a story shaped largely by Yhwh’s particular commitment to Israel, Israel is encouraged to reflect on the universal concern for those who experience oppression. In this respect, the words famously attributed to Hermann Cohen, a 19th-century Jewish philosopher, ring true: “The alien was to be protected, not because he was a member of one’s family, clan, religious community, or people; but because he was a human being. In the alien, therefore, man discovered the idea of humanity” (emphasis original).37

37. To my knowledge, the first attribution of this quotation to Hermann Cohen was made by J. H. Hertz in The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text, English Translation, and Commentary (London: Soncino, 1937) 313. The quotation does not appear in the original publication of the Exodus commentary, Exodus (Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text, English Translation, and Commentary; London: Oxford University Press, 1930) 259. Hertz generally references Cohen’s “Juedische Schriften” and “Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums” as works he consulted in preparation of the commentary. The quotation captures well Cohen’s sentiments from the latter work in the chapter entitled “The Discovery of Man as Fellowman,” though it does not contain the quotation itself; Religion of Reason Out of Sources of Judaism (trans. S. Kaplan; 2nd ed.; American Academy of Religion Text and Translation Series 7; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 113–43, particularly pp. 125–28. Unfortunately, Hertz is not more specific about the provenance of the quotation, and I am unable to verify its authenticity.