

CHEVRAH TORAH...5777

With HEART in MIND

MUSSAR Teaching to Transform the Text & Our Lives

BO—Exodus 12:24-28...13:3-8,14-16

EMUNAT CHACHAMIM—Faith in the Sages

...Key KOSHI...

WHAT is the connection between questioning and having faith?

HOW do the responses of the Sages embody a covenantal approach to faith ?



P'SHAT...Studying Torah—Encountering The Word—The Will—The ONE

The truly wise individual is not one who has achieved wisdom but a *talmid chacham*—a wise student...one who is constantly learning—including by observing and reflecting on what can be learned from other people.

<p>12:24] “You shall observe this as an institution for all time, for you and for your descendants. 25] And when you enter the land that the Eternal will give you, as promised, you shall observe this rite. 26] And when your children ask you, ‘What do you mean by this rite?’ 27] you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Eternal, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when smiting the Egyptians, but saved our houses.’” Those assembled then bowed low in homage. 28]And the Israelites went and did so; just as the Eternal had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.</p>	<p>12:24 ושמרתם את־הדָּבָר הַזֶּה לְחֻק־לֶךְ וּלְבְנֵי־ךָ עֲדֵעוֹלָם: 25 וְהָיָה כִּי־תָבֹאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִתֶּן יְהוָה לָכֶם בְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת: 26 וְהָיָה כִּי־יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם מַה הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם: 27 וְאָמַרְתֶּם זְבַח־פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל־בְּתֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּנִגְפוֹ אֶת־מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־בְּתֵינוּ הִצִּיל וַיִּקַּד הָעָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ: 28 וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶהְרֹן כֹּן עָשׂוּ:</p>
<p>13:3] And Moses said to the people, “Remember this day, on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how the Eternal freed you from it with a mighty hand: no leavened bread shall be eaten. 4]You go free on this day, in the month of Abib. 5] So, when the Eternal has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which was sworn to your fathers to be given you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall observe in this month the following practice:</p>	<p>13:3 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעָם זְכוֹר אֶת־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יִצְאֶתֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים כִּי בַחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיא יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה וְלֹא יֹאכַל חֵמֶץ: 4 הַיּוֹם אַתֶּם יֹצְאִים בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב: 5 וְהָיָה כִּי יָבִיאֲכֶם יְהוָה אֶל־הָאָרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאֲבוֹתֵיךָ לָתֵת לָךְ אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ וְעָבַדְתָּ אֶת־הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה:</p>

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.
 Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.
 Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

6] "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival of the Eternal. 7] Throughout the seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten; no leavened bread shall be found with you, and no leaven shall be found in all your territory. 8] And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Eternal did for me when I went free from Egypt.'"

14] And when , in time to come, a child of yours asks you, saying, 'What does this mean?' you shall reply, 'It was with a mighty hand that the Eternal brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage. 15] When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Eternal slew every [male] first-born in the land of Egypt, the first-born of both human and beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Eternal every first male issue of the womb, but redeem every male first-born among my children.'

16]"And so it shall be as a sign upon your hand and as a symbol on your forehead that with a mighty hand the Eternal feed us from Egypt."

6 שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצֶּת וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי חַג לַיהוָה : 7 מִצּוֹת יֹאכַל אֶת שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לָּךְ חֶמֶץ וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לָּךְ שָׂאֵר בְּכָל־גְּבֻלְךָ : 8 וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יְהוָה לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם

14 וְהָיָה כִּי־שְׁאַלְךָ בְּנֶךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מַה־זֶּאת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבְּיַת עֲבָדִים : 15 וַיְהִי כִּי־הִקְשָׁה פְּרַעֲהַ לְשַׁלְּחָנוּ וַיַּהַרְג יְהוָה כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכֹר אָדָם וְעַד־בְּכוֹר בַּהֵמָה עַל־כֵּן אָנֹכִי זֹבַח לַיהוָה כָּל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם הַזְּכָרִים וְכָל־בְּכוֹר בְּנֵי אִפְדָּה : 16 וְהָיָה לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְכָה וּלְטוֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ כִּי בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם

REMEZ...*Acquiring Torah*...When Torah penetrates our entire being, not just our *seichel/intellect*, this is the acquisition of Torah. —R' Avi Fertig

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12:26-7 *And when your children ask you: What does this ritual mean to you? You shall say, It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, because He passed over the houses of the Children of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians but saved our houses.. Then the people bowed low in gratitude...*

ETZ HAYIM... “*And when your children ask you...*” This is the origin of the Seder custom of having the children ask Four Questions. The three references in this par’sha, and one in Deuteronomy, gave rise to the Haggadah passage about the Four Children. Exod 13:8, “*V’Higadta L’vanecha—And you shall explain to your child,*” emphasizes the parents’ role in informing children even if they do not ask.

13:6-8 *Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a Festival to the Lord... Throughout the 7 days, no leavened bread shall be found in all your territory. And you shall explain to your child on that day: It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went forth from Egypt.*

MECHILTA... Why is this said: *It is because of what the Lord did for me...*” Because it also says “*What do you mean by this service?*” [Ex 12:26] This is but the question of the wicked son who excludes himself from the collective. And because he excludes himself, say to him: “*It is because of that which the Lord did for me,*” for me, and not for you. Had you been there [in Egypt,] you would not have been redeemed!

RASHI... In the earlier passage [12:26] it is said: *What is this service to you?*” That verse is spoken by the wicked son, removing himself from the category of those included in this service...The verse here speaks of the son “*who does not know enough to ask.*” You should open to him with a discussion of the Exodus story, with Aggadic matters that arouse his curiosity.

R’E.MUNK... “*Mah Ha-Avodah Hazot Lachem—What is this service to you?*” [12:26] From the somewhat arrogant tone of the question, the author of the Haggadah attributes it to the wicked son, based on the MECHILTA. But as RASHI points out in 13:8, the answer given is derived from the retort given to the one who does not know to ask. The parent is free to reply in a manner befitting the child’s character, question, and state of mind.

SeFAS EMES... The Rasha is selfish; he won’t do anything without knowing what’s in it for him... Thus, he disassociates himself and pronounces the Seder “*avodah*”—not “*service*,” but “*toil*.”...By excluding himself from the “*k’lal*,” the Rasha has “*denied the essentials of our faith.*” To neutralize his son’s selfishness, the father “*hak’heh et shinav—blunts his teeth,*” dulling the bite of his attack by showing him what he deems pointless is in fact beneficial...By excluding himself from the *toil* of *observance*, he has no claim to redemption

R’S.RISKIN... The commentaries ask the obvious question. If the Wicked Child excludes himself, is it not also true that the Wise Child excludes himself? The Rasha says, “*What is this service to you,*” but the *hakham* also says, “*What are these testimonies, statutes, and judgments which the Lord has commanded you.*” Both speak in terms of “*you*”; both distance themselves. Actually, though, the difference is very clear. First, the Wise Child includes himself by mentioning *Adonai Eloheinu*—the Lord our God. Not only does he mention God, which the Wicked Child does not, but he uses the pronoun “*our*.” Second, he uses the term “*etchem*” which does not imply self-exclusion, in contradistinction to the Rasha’s *Lachem*—“*to you.*” The third and most crucial difference between the two children lies not so much in what they say but in how they say it. The Wise Child addresses himself to content, asking detailed questions; the Wicked Child challenges the whole ritual, lumping everything into *avodah*. The Rasha sets up a negative relationship between himself and his family. The *hakham*, on the other hand, inquires into the rituals which tie family and nation together. He asks about the “*within.*” The Wicked Child stops short at the “*without.*”

The MAGGID of KOZNITZ... “*What is this service to you?*” The verse in Torah begins “*V’Hayah—it shall come to pass.*” *V’Hayah* connotes happiness. What happiness will a father feel from a wicked son’s question? The very fact that he asks shows interest, and any question is a source of happiness.

13:14 *And when your child asks in the time to come: What is this? You shall say to him, “With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt...”.*

RASHI... This is the *Foolish child* who doesn’t know how to ask a deeper question. Thus, we have the Four; respond to each in kind.

ALSHECH... The question of the son in 13:14 and the comment of the son in 12:26 follow the same rule:

V’Higadta—you shall tell. The questions are not to be construed as criticism, but a desire for understanding...

D'RASH...*Helping the Heart feel what the Mind understands ...*

Alan MORINIS...

Faith begins at the point where our sure knowledge ceases...

The fact is that the task of compiling the law did not stop when the Talmud was completed...In every generation we have had sages who have shouldered the task of knowing the Torah that has already been illuminated so well that they could apply it to the ever-changing situations of the human world...We need to rely on the sages of our time to help guide us through the innumerable difficult issues that crop up that are unique to the modern world...

On first glance, this sounds like we are being asked to have blind faith, but that cannot be. Rav Dessler explains that having faith in the sages does not mean that one can never question them...It is intrinsic to the Jewish way of spiritual growth that we question and argue. We have the right (and, in fact, the obligation!) to raise questions and to exercise our intellects...But there are many ways to question.

Because we enter the territory of faith when we reach the outer boundary of knowledge, having faith in the sages calls on us to assume that the wisest people understand what we do not.

When we question them, it is questioning based in humility, not to prove them wrong but to develop our own understanding and come to a better grasp of the truth...If we cannot grasp the wisdom that is before us, we must question, but even that seeming critique needs to be set within the context of faith. To grow in the way of Torah and to internalize its gifts, we are meant to question and probe constructively...Faith resides in the heart, and it is there it must be cultivated...Perfect faith is achieved, not by philosophic inquiry, but by opening up...our hearts...That is the gift the Sages bring to us...that we should open our hearts to receive and treasure.

[With Heart in Mind, pgs 130-133]

R'SHLOMO RISKIN...

A great Hasidic Rebbe once asked why we insist on questions only on Passover night. Are there not aspects of other festivals and their rituals that are at least as strange as some of the Pesach rituals that evoke the Four Questions? Why do we not ask four questions on Sukkot, including one such as "On all other nights of the year we sit and eat in our home, but on this night we eat outside in a little hut"? At least four questions could certainly be asked about other Jewish festivals. The Rebbe answered his own query. For a Jew to have to leave his secure home and suddenly have to eat his meal in a small rickety hut is not a strange experience. That has been the story of the Jew's life for the last two thousand years and, unfortunately, does not raise a single question. For the Jews to sit around an opulent Seder table, however, is strange enough to warrant many questions. One might add to the Rebbe's words: For the Jew to thank God for his redemption when all of Jewish history seems to teach the opposite, occasions not only four questions but many more.

The Four Questions themselves reflect a curious paradox of servitude and redemption. The matzah, which is the subject of the first question, is a slave bread but also a symbol of freedom. We go on to the bitter herbs in the second question. They are a symbol of servitude, but their use as hors d'oeuvre and their being dipped into another food is a sign of opulence. Similarly, the third and fourth questions. We eat *karpas* dipped in salt water, which is reminiscent of Jewish pain and tears, yet we recline as a show of redemption. In essence, the Four Questions touch upon the paradox of Seder night, when the symbols of servitude and suffering intertwine with those of redemption.

SOD...*Helping the soul-light shine...*

Practice focuses on recalibrating the soul-traits that are obstructing your soul's light from shining into your l

Rabbi JULES HARLOW...

The Four Questions. Why are these questions asked and never directly answered in the Haggadah? To this question there are more than four answers.

1. Questioning is a sign of freedom, proof that we are free to investigate, to analyze, to satisfy our intellectual curiosity.
2. The simplest question can have many answers, sometimes complex and contradictory ones, even as life itself is fraught with complexity and contradictions. To see everything as good or bad, *matzah* or *maror*, is to be enslaved to simplicity.
3. The Haggadah challenges us to ask ourselves whether we are asking the right questions.
4. To accept the fact that not every question has an answer, that not every problem can be neatly resolved, is another stage of liberation. In the same way that questioning is a sign of freedom, acknowledging that some things are beyond our understanding is a sign of faith. Says Rabbi Wolfe of Zhitomir: "For the believer, there is no question; for the non-believer, there is no answer.
5. When we find the answers for ourselves, we find ourselves experiencing and understanding the true meaning of the Exodus.

[Passover Haggadah The Feast of Freedom, Rabbinical Assembly, 1982, pg 33]

MILAN KUNDERA...[Novelist, anti-Communist activist, Czech Republic]

I invent stories, confront one with another, and by this means I ask questions. The stupidity of people comes from having an answer for everything. The wisdom of the novel comes from having a question for everything...

The novelist teaches the reader to comprehend the world as a question. There is wisdom and tolerance in that attitude. In a world built on sacrosanct certainties, the novel is dead. The totalitarian world is a world of answers rather than questions...It seems to me that all over the world people nowadays prefer to judge rather than to understand, to answer rather than ask, so that the voice of the novel can hardly be heard over the noisy foolishness of human certainties.

[A Night to Remember, Noam Zion, 2002, pg 25]

...PRACTICE...

CONSIDER:

WHO are the Sages in your life?...

WHAT question you might ask would bring greatest life guidance?

Find a Sage...ASK a sincere/core question...TALK together about the answer.

HOW do your life-questions help strengthen your faith?