

# Pesach — A Time for Questions?

Category: Holidays, Pesach

*What are the answers to the four questions?*

Last night, every Jewish child asked his father the Four Questions. What are those four questions?...

Now that we know the four questions, who can tell me the answers?

In fact, only two answers are written in the Haggadah. The paragraphs of "Matzo Zu" and "Maror Zeh" explain why we eat matzo and marror, but there is no answer at all to why we lean at the Seder and why we dip twice.

Every year our children ask the same question and we never give them the answers! Instead, we pour four cups of wine for them, and by the fourth cup they've hopefully forgotten their questions - until next year when the whole scene will replay itself.

In Eastern Europe, the Jewish schools had a very interesting name. They were called "Cheder," which literally means "room." In the Talmud, we find many names for schools such as Beit haSefer, Mesiftah, Beit haMidrash, and even Beit Raban (school children are called Tinokot shel Beit Raban). Each of these names describes the institution, books, study and rabbis. But where does the name "Cheder" come from?

The Rebbe once explained the following:

Shir haShirim, the Song of Songs, is one long description of the marriage between G-d and the Jewish people. The actual wedding took place at Mt. Sinai when G-d gave us His Torah. In the Song of Songs, King Solomon describes this event as, "He brought me to his room (cheder)," G-d brought us to his private chamber to study Torah.

The unique thing about that first time the Jewish people entered the chambers of Torah study was that they entered with open minds. They were not entertaining any preconceived notions. They were prepared to hear and follow, without argument or even question, the commandments they were about to hear for the

first time. That is what makes Matan Torah so special. Young children approach Torah learning with the same innocent acceptance as the Jews at Mt. Sinai — and that's why we call it "Cheder."

The Alter Rebbe made his Yeshiva for only the greatest scholars. But he didn't call it an "advanced Bet Midrash." He called the groups of young scholars "Chadarim"; "Cheder" 1, "Cheder" 2, "Cheder" 3. He did this to stress that in his yeshiva, Torah study is approached through humility and innocence.

Every Jew, no matter how much Torah he has studied, should adopt this innocent approach to Torah learning. Instead of coming armed with a million questions: "Where was G-d during the Holocaust?" "How do you know G-d exists?" "Why do bad things happen to good people?" "Can you prove the world is only 5767 years old?" "Why must woman sit behind the Mechitza?" and so on and on and on, a person should come to hear the word of G-d, and not to try and outsmart Him.

When someone asks me these questions, I always suggest that he put the questions aside and learn Torah with me. Then, after six months, we reevaluate the questions. More often than not, after six months those questions don't even exist anymore. Not because I answered them, but because they simply disappear, together with the notion that "I know everything and I am so smart that G-d should hire me as His adviser if He knew what was good for Him!" After learning a little, people come to the realization that we are indeed human and that we are just lucky that the one infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent G-d has chosen to give us His glorious Torah that tells us how to live our tiny little lives.

One comes to the realization that if G-d is the infinite Creator and we are the finite creations then it is no wonder that we don't understand His ways! A little Torah goes a long way as an "attitude adjuster."

This is also what happens to the four questions our children ask at the Seder. At the beginning of the Seder, we all have so many questions. But as we read in the Haggadah how G-d so miraculously took us out of Egypt, we slowly are elevated to the point where our questions no longer matter.

As they say, "For an atheist, answers will not help, and believers don't have questions." During the Seder we are elevated to the highest levels of faith attainable. So, does anyone have any questions?