

Notes for Shabbat HaGadol drashah
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We all know the Four Questions, and this is the season to ask them. I have here a book containing **300 ways** to ask the Four Questions! It includes two CDs with the recordings of these 300 ways. (You can see and hear excerpts from the book here: <http://whyisthisnight.com>.)

But we aren't supposed simply to ask the Four Questions. In fact, the Four Questions are just *examples* of questions we are supposed to ask to generate discussion at the *seder*.

There are *many, many other questions* we could ask about what happens on the night of the *seder*.

Here on this study sheet are Ten Questions asked by the late Rabbi Jacob Chinitz. Let's go through them and see what we can make of them:

**Previewing the Seder:
"Beyond the Four Questions"
By Rabbi Jacob Chinitz, z"l
(Adapted by Rabbi Carl M. Perkins)**

- 1. Why is *Yachatz* (breaking the middle *matzah*) performed before *Maggid* (the telling of the story of the Exodus), and not after *Motzi*, when the *matzah* is first eaten?**
- 2. Why is the Haggadah in Hebrew, except for the opening *Ha Lachma Anya* ("This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate ...")?**
- 3. Why do we open the door for *Shefokh Hamatkhah* ("Pour out Your wrath on the nations that know You not!"), and not when we say *Kol Dikhfin Yete* ("Let all who are hungry come and eat!")?**
- 4. Why do we distribute nuts and do other different things to stimulate the children to ask questions, but the four questions asked do not refer to those things, but to things done after *Ma Nishtanah*?**
- 5. Why do we shun the Egyptians, but imitate the Romans through the way we conduct the Seder banquet, and with the *karpas* and the *haseba* (the reclining), *derech herut* (in the manner of free men and women)?**
- 6. What is the real reason for the *Arbah Kosot* (four cups of wine): *Daled Leshonot Shel Geulah* (the four expressions or stages of redemption), or the fact that we honor**

the four steps – i.e., Kadesh, Maggid, Birkat Hamazon, and Hallel -- with a cup of wine?

7. Why do we make the *Charoset* sweet, if it is meant to remind us of the clay or mortar used in Egypt?

8. If the *Afikoman* is meant to remind us of the *Korban Pesach* (the *pesach* sacrifice), why does it consist of Matzah, and not of meat?

9. Is *Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim* (the retelling of the exodus from Egypt) like *Tefilah* (the recitation of the *amidah*), which can be fulfilled by the *Sheliach Tzibur* (prayer leader) for us, and like *Keriat Hatorah* (the reading of the Torah in synagogue), which is fulfilled by the *Baal Koreh* (the *torah* reader) on our behalf -- or is it like *Keriat Shema* (the recitation of the *Sh'ma*), which must be recited by us ourselves?

10. Why are the four questions of *Mah Nishtanah* not really answered in the *Haggadah*?

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I think you can see from this exercise that although the name of the event we'll all hopefully be attending on Monday and Tuesday night is "*seder*," meaning "order," the event isn't as well organized, as logically arranged, as it might be. It arose over time, and there have been many additions, deletions and alterations.

But there *is* an order, and that is significant. The point of our questions, actually, isn't really to understand the *seder* better, it's to understand *reality* better. Let me explain.

There's a Hasidic teaching that is apt: Why is the evening called a "*seder*"? Because the world we live in is in a state of "*ee-seder*", i.e., *disorder*, and the event is there to remind us that redemption points to a new and different world, one characterized by liberation, freedom, liberty, a world in which there is greater correlation between reality and our values, there is greater coherence of dream and reality.

My hope is that we'll ask many, many questions at the *seder*, not only the ten on this sheet, but many, many others, such as, "Why aren't we there yet?" and "What can we do to get us there as soon as possible?" I hope that we'll come to understand better what role we can play to bring near that day on which, in the words of today's *haftarah*, parents will reconcile with children, and children with parents, and the word "*seder*" or order will describe not only our dream but the world in which we live as well.

Hag Sameach!